DULCES ANTE OMNIA MUSÆ

J. Barry Brown.

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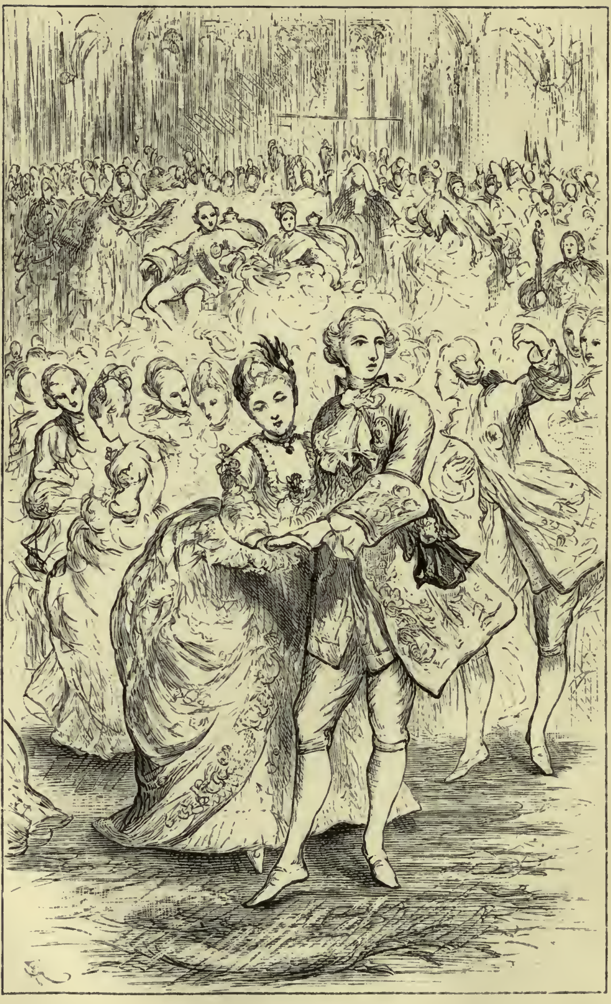
THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.



THE MINUET.

P. 128.

THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON

OR

CITY LIFE IN THE LAST CENTURY

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

> "By this light I do not think but to be Lord Mayor of London before I die."
> *Green's Tu Quoque.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY FREDERICK GILBERT.

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET
1880

BY W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.

Uniform with this Volume.

THE TOWER OF LONDON.
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GUY FAWKES.
SAINT JAMES'S: Or, the Court of Queen Anne.
OLD SAINT PAUL'S; A Tale of the Plague and the Fire.
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PRESTON FIGHT; Or, the Insurrection of 1715.
THE MANCHESTER REBELS; Or, the Fatal '45.
THE CONSTABLE OF THE TOWER.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM CUBITT,

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

My Lord Mayor,

To no one could this attempt to depict a worthy and able Chief Magistrate of the City of London, raised to that exalted position by meritorious conduct and integrity, ably discharging his many important public functions, and maintaining with becoming splendour the dignity of his high office,—to no one, I say, could a work, having such an aim, be more appropriately inscribed than to yourself, who, from the estimation you are held in by your fellow-citizens, have obtained the proud distinction of being twice chosen Lord Mayor of London, and have fully

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approved the justice and wisdom of the selection by the efficient manner in which you have throughout performed your duties, by the dignity you have ever maintained, and by the splendid and ceaseless hospitalities you have practised.

The principal character in my Tale, it is almost needless to observe, is imaginary. Sir Gresham Lorimer is simply, as I have intimated, my idea of a worthy Lord Mayor. If any points of resemblance should be discovered between him and your lordship, they are accidental; though I may have been unconsciously influenced in the portraiture by the living model.

Hitherto, Aldermen and Common-Councilmen have been a standing jest with dramatists, novelists, and comic writers, who have made them their butt, burlesqued their proceedings, and caricatured their manners. Such is not the course I have pursued. Knowing the municipal authorities to be generally men of sterling character, of high intelligence and capacity, zealous in the discharge of their public duties, and energetic in the maintenance of the rights and privileges of the great city they represent, I have painted them as such.

My picture may be incorrect, but it is nearer the truth than the caricatures I have referred to.

In the early part of this Tale occur some descriptions of the ancient and picturesque City pageants once attendant on the Lord Mayor's Procession to Westminster. From an address at one of these pageants in the reign of Good Queen Bess, "donne by George Peele, Maister of Artes in Oxford," I will cite the concluding lines. They are just as applicable to your lordship as to your predecessor, Woolstone Dixie, Lord Mayor of London in 1585, before whom they were pronounced:

> This now remains, right honourable lord,
> That carefully you do attend and keep
> The city, wherewithal your sovereign queen
> Hath put your honour lovingly in trust;
> That you may add to London's dignity,
> And London's dignity may add to yours!

Accept the assurance of my profound respect.

I have the honour to be,
Your Lordship's very faithful Servant,
W. Harrison Ainsworth.

Brighton, July 10, 1862.

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THE

Lord Mayor of London.

BOOK I.

GUILDHALL.

I.

LORD MAYOR'S DAY, A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

On the ninth of November, 1761, there was great jubilation in the City of London.

On that day, the Right Hon. Sir Gresham Lorimer, Knight, draper, alderman for Cheap Ward, and member of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Tailors, entered upon his duties as first magistrate of the first city in the world. Most auspiciously did his mayoralty commence. Called by the popular voice to the civic chair, his election had been almost unanimous, there being only one vote for the brother alderman, nominated with him by the livery; and when the choice of the court was made known by the Recorder, the announcement was received with great cheering. The applause was even more vehement when, being called forth, the Lord Mayor elect was invested with the chain, and returned thanks for the great honour done him. Subsequently, on his being presented to the Lord Chancellor by the Recorder, the approbation of the Crown was very graciously communicated to him by his lordship. The farewell dinner jointly given by Sir Gresham and Sir Matthew Blakiston, the retiring Lord Mayor, was remarkable, even in the City, for splendour and profusion, and held out promise of many a glorious banquet hereafter.

Special circumstances conspired to lend additional lustre to our Lord Mayor's Day. Not only was he generally respected by his fellow-citizens; not only was he certain of an enthusiastic reception from the thousands assembled to greet him on his way to Westminster; not only had unwonted care been bestowed on the procession destined to attend him; not only were some of the old civic pageants—the delight of the multitude—to be revived for the occasion; but on that day George III., then young and newly married, was about to honour the City with his presence—according to custom, it being the first Lord Mayor's Day subsequent to his coronation—to view the show, and partake of the grand civic feast at Guildhall.

As the young monarch would be accompanied on this occasion by his consort, Queen Charlotte, the whole of the royal family and the ministers, extraordinary preparations were made for their reception. As usual, the day was kept as a general holiday. The shops were closed, and business altogether suspended. Bells were rung, guns fired, and other noisy demonstrations of delight made. Scaffoldings were erected by the City companies for the accommodation of their wardens and livery-men at various points calculated to command a good view of the procession. Many of the houses were decorated with cloths and carpets, and hung with flags and banners, and arrangements were made for a general illumination at night.

Four regiments of the City Militia were ordered to line the way from Temple-bar to the top of Ludgate-hill, and took up their position betimes. Others were stationed at intervals from Saint Paul's Churchyard to Guildhall.

All public vehicles were prohibited in the principal thoroughfares, and no private carriages were allowed to pass along Cheapside, or approach Guildhall, whence the procession was to start, except those belonging to the aldermen and sheriffs, or other personages connected with the show.

A vast and continually-increasing concourse filled Cheapside and the streets leading to Blackfriars, where the Lord Mayor was to embark in his state-barge and proceed by water to Westminster, and a good many brawls and disturbances took place, which the combined efforts of the militia and the peace-officers scarcely sufficed to check—the mobs in those days being very turbulent and pugnacious, and exceedingly ready, not only with sticks and bludgeons, but with such weapons as nature had provided them withal. Broken pates, damaged noses, or darkened orbs of vision generally followed these conflicts.

However, as on this occasion the bulk of the crowd consisted of decently-behaved citizens, who had brought their wives and daughters with them to see the Lord Mayor's show, the quarrels were of rarer occurrence than usual, and more speedily subdued. High and low, masters and apprentices, were dressed in holiday attire, and, to judge from their looks, full of glee, and bent upon enjoyment.

Fortunately for all concerned in the show, whether as actors or spectators, the day was remarkably fine. The sun shone forth brilliantly, gladdening every heart, while the prescriptive fogs of November held good-naturedly aloof.

Before proceeding further, it may be proper to say a few words concerning the hero of the day. Sir Gresham Lorimer's previous history is soon told, being unmarked by any exciting incident or adventure. His career had been simply that of a citizen, who, by industry and integrity, had risen from a humble position to wealth and honour. Circumstances no doubt favoured him in his progress, but so they generally do the deserving.

Born in Bucklersbury, about sixty years before the present important epoch in his history, Gresham was the third son of a drysalter, in a very small way of business, who had got into difficulties, and never recovered from them, but who was able to give his son a good education by placing him at Merchant Tailors' School, where the lad remained until his father's death, when he was apprenticed to Mr Tradescant, a prosperous draper in Cheapside, who knew the family and had taken a fancy to the youth.

Gresham did not disappoint the expectations formed of him by his worthy master. Discreet, diligent, and shrewd, he soon became Mr Tradescant's right hand. On the expiration of his term, he was made head clerk, and a few years afterwards was taken into partnership by his employer, the firm thenceforward being TRADESCANT AND LORIMER.

Before attaining this position, which established his success in life, Gresham had lost his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, and to whose support he had of late mainly contributed. His brothers, Godfrey and Lawrence, neither of whom was distinguished by the same good qualities as himself, had left London to seek a fortune elsewhere, and had not since been heard of, so that he was left alone in the world. It was then that Mr Tradescant judged it the fitting season to put in execution a design he had long since conceived. The worthy draper was a widower, with an only child, a daughter, on whom all his hopes and affections were fixed, and there was no one, he thought, to whom her happiness could be more securely confided than Gresham Lorimer.

Celia Tradescant responded to her father's wishes. Her heart was entirely disengaged; or, if she had any preference, it was for the very person selected for her. A few years younger than Gresham Lorimer, she had not failed to admire him, as they sat together in Mr Tradescant's large pew in Bow Church, and looked over the same prayer-book. But, to Gresham's credit, it must be stated that he had not ventured to raise his eyes towards his master's fair daughter, and it was only when placed on an equality with her that he thought it possible he might obtain the prize. Even then it was necessary for Mr Tradescant to make his intentions manifest before the young man dared to comprehend them.

At last, however, the event so much desired by all parties was satisfactorily brought about. The young couple were married at the altar of the church where they had so often knelt together, and a very grand wedding it was. All Cheapside was alive that morning; musicians played before Mr Tradescant's dwelling, and alms and viands were liberally distributed among the poor.

Who so happy now as Gresham Lorimer!—blessed with a very pretty wife, and partner in a very lucrative concern, which must one day be entirely his own. Brilliant, indeed, were his prospects, and they continued undimmed to the very time of which we treat, except by such few mischances as are inseparable from human affairs. Having arranged matters to his satisfaction, good Mr Tradescant committed the management of his business entirely to his son-in-law, and passed the remainder of his days in calm contentment with his beloved daughter, living long enough to see his grandchildren springing around him.

Several children were born to Mr and Mrs Lorimer, but of these the only survivors at the time of our narrative were three daughters and a son. Of these and their mother more anon, our present business being with Sir Gresham. His probity and honourable conduct gained him a very high character in the City. Necessarily, he had served as sheriff, or he could not have been elevated to the civic chair, and he had displayed so much efficiency in the discharge of his duties while holding that important office, coupled with so much liberality and hospitality, that he was then marked out for a still higher dignity, in case he should aspire to it.

It was during his shrievalty that he received the honour of knighthood from the late king, George II., and this circumstance was not less gratifying to himself than to his spouse, who had become much more consequential since her husband had risen in importance. Sir Gresham's next step towards the object of his ambition—for ambitious he undoubtedly was of becoming Lord Mayor—was his election as alderman. A vacancy having occurred in the court by the death of the alderman for Cheap Ward, Sir Gresham was chosen out of three candidates to fill the office. In this new position he speedily distinguished himself as an active and intelligent magistrate, a zealous administrator of the affairs of the City, and a watchful guardian of City rights and interests. No man, except, perhaps, his brother alderman, Mr Beckford, had more weight with the common council than he, and as the City exercised considerable political influence at that time, his power was felt by the government.

Sir Gresham's elevation to the mayoralty was accelerated by an important political event, to which allusion must now be briefly made. Pitt's vigorous and successful conduct of the wars in which we were engaged during the latter part of the preceding reign had raised the national pride to such a pitch, that the mere idea of a peace was distasteful to the country. But on the accession of George III. it soon became apparent that a new influence, antagonistic to that of the Great Commoner, was at work. Before mounting the throne the young prince had been entirely guided by his mother, the Princess-Dowager of Wales, a woman of ambitious character and passionate temperament, who, in her turn, was governed by her confidential adviser, the Earl of Bute. It was foreseen that, by the double influence possessed by Bute over the mother and the son, he must needs play an important part in the direction of state affairs, and events speedily justified the correctness of the supposition. Bute's aim was to be supreme in the cabinet, but speedily discovering that Pitt was an insurmountable obstacle to his designs, and that so long as he continued in the ministry, uncontrolled sway would be impossible, he determined to remove him. With the exception of Lord Temple, Pitt's brother-in-law, all the other members of the administration, including its ostensible head, the old Duke of Newcastle, showed themselves sufficiently pliant, so that the "Favourite's" task did not appear particularly difficult. With the view of supplanting his rival, he contrived to inspire the young king with an inclination for peace, persuading him it would be most beneficial to the country, and well knowing that any such proposition made to Pitt in the present posture of affairs would encounter his violent opposition, and if persisted in, and carried in his despite, would infallibly cause his resignation.

The scheme proved successful. But the indignation of the whole country was roused against the intriguing "Favourite" by whose arts it had been deprived of a minister to whom it owed its salvation. Loud was the clamour against Bute throughout the land, and the Duke of Newcastle and his colleagues came in for a share of the popular obloquy. Even the young king himself was censured.

Pitt was the idol of the City, but of all his partisans, and their name was legion, the most zealous and devoted were Sir Gresham Lorimer and Mr Beckford, both of whom enjoyed a certain degree of his confidence, and when the patriotic minister resigned the seals as a secretary, because his bold and judicious counsels of a prompt declaration of war against Spain, and the seizure of the Plate fleet before it could get into port, were overruled by his perfidious colleagues, a meeting of the common council was summoned by Sir Gresham, and an address proposed to the king praying Pitt's recall. Such a representation of the sentiments of the City could not be disregarded by his Majesty. The indignant secretary, however, refused to return to office. But while declining his royal master's solicitations, he accepted the pension graciously offered him—an act that temporarily lowered him in the estimation of his City friends. A letter, however, subsequently addressed to them in justification of his conduct, completely restored him to their good opinion.

"There!" exclaimed Sir Gresham, after reading this letter to the court. "I hope you are satisfied with the Great Commoner's explanation. I never doubted him for a moment, knowing him to be incorruptible, and solely influenced by the noblest and most patriotic motives. As to the pension, he deserves all that a grateful country can bestow upon him—infinitely more than £3000 a year. His foresight and prudence will soon be made manifest. Government will be forced to follow out his plans. But they can't get on without him. We must have him back again—in spite of my Lord Bute—and at the head of the administration. The sooner the 'Favourite' is dismissed, the better. I hope he may hear what we think of him in the City."

The "Favourite" *did* hear of it, and contemptuously remarked that Sir Gresham Lorimer was a meddlesome blockhead, who had better stick to his shop, instead of interfering in matters that didn't concern him, and about which he knew nothing.

These few disparaging words served Sir Gresham more than the highest commendation could have done. From that moment the City resolved to avenge him upon the "Favourite." His name was in every man's mouth. They would have no other Lord Mayor. Lord Bute should learn what they thought of him and his sneers. If he treated the City with scorn, the City would pay him in his own coin—and with interest. He had sneered at Sir Gresham Lorimer, and called him "a meddlesome blockhead." Very well. "The meddlesome blockhead" should be Lord Mayor. The City was unanimous on this point. So Sir Gresham was triumphantly elected, as we have shown.

Since Lord Bute must needs accompany his royal master on his visit to the City, an opportunity would be afforded the citizens of displaying the estimation in which they held him. They would likewise be able to manifest their opinion of Mr Pitt and Lord Temple, who were also to be the Lord Mayor's guests at Guildhall. It was plain that the day would be one of triumph to the Great Commoner, and of humiliation and mortification to the "Favourite."

II.

THE LADY MAYORESS AND HER FAMILY.

CONSTANT to the City, where he was born and bred, where the happiest hours of his life had been spent and his fortune made, Sir Gresham Lorimer, on becoming wealthy and important, would not desert it, but proof against the solicitations of Lady Lorimer and his family, who would willingly have moved westward, continued to dwell in Cheapside, in the house where his business was conducted, and where his worthy and highly-respected father-in-law, Mr Tradescant, had so long resided.

Situated on the same side as Bow Church, at the corner of Queen-street, the house was old-fashioned, having been built soon after the Great Fire of London, but it was large and commodious, and with extensive premises at the rear, and answered perfectly well the double purpose of a private dwelling and a place of business. The lower floor was devoted to the shop and warehouse, and entirely separated from the upper part of the house; an arrangement slightly differing from that observed during Mr Tradescant's time, when the apprentices lodged and boarded with their master. The habitation had a solid and rather heavy look, being totally devoid of ornament, unless the wide balcony on the first-floor could be termed ornamental. The private entrance was from Queen-street, and the porch over the doorway was handsome, its far-projecting roof being supported by carved pillars, and embellished with a scutcheon displaying the arms of the Tradescants.

Within, a wide staircase conducted to a gallery opening upon several spacious apartments; in one of the largest of which, facing Cheapside, the family of the Lord Mayor, with his chaplain and some other guests, presently to be described, were assembled at breakfast about ten o'clock on the morning in question. His lordship himself had not made his appearance, being engaged with two of the aldermen and the sheriffs in another room, but was momentarily expected.

As it may perhaps surprise those unacquainted with civic usages to learn that the Lord Mayor had not yet quitted his private residence, it may be mentioned that time is always courteously allowed the retiring city magnate to remove, without haste or inconvenience, from the scene of his late grandeur. Sir Matthew Blakiston was therefore permitted to occupy the Mansion House for a few days longer.

At this juncture, our Lord Mayor's residence presented a much more imposing aspect than it ordinarily wore. The shop, of course, was closed. The balcony was overhung by a rich canopy, from which curtains of crimson damask were suspended, while in front were displayed two banners, on one of which the royal arms were gorgeously emblazoned, and on the other the City arms. The upper windows were likewise decorated and hung with flags.

The street was kept clear in front of the house, and for a considerable space on either side, by mounted troopers, and by a posse of peace-officers and staves-men. Queen-street was also kept clear as far as Watling-street for the Lord Mayor's state-coach, and for the sheriffs' carriages. The whole of New King-street was occupied by a vast number of persons, some on foot and some on horseback, and many in extraordinary habits, connected with the procession, which was to start from Guildhall. Here were drawn up the standard-bearers of the City companies, the bargemen in their liveries, the watermen carrying various colours, the beadles, the mounted trumpeters, the mounted guard, the ancient herald, esquires, armourers, ancient knights, armed cap-à-pie, yeomen of the guard, with a crowd of grotesque and fantastic personages belonging to the pageants. Besides these, and many others too numerous to particularize, there were three or four military bands, one of which, stationed in Cheapside nearly opposite the Lord Mayor's residence, enlivened the multitude collected thereabouts by their music. Tall footmen in state liveries, wearing large three-cornered hats, laced and feathered, and carrying long gold-headed canes, congregated at Sir Gresham's door, which, being thrown wide open, admitted a view of other lacqueys and porters lining the passage, or standing at the foot of the staircase, all quite as grandly arrayed as their fellows outside, and quite as proud in look and deportment.

But let us now repair to the room where the breakfast-party were assembled.

The Lady Mayoress, it has been intimated, was a few years younger than her husband, and being still in remarkably good preservation, might be termed a fine woman. Her person was rather on a large scale, it is true, her features fat and rounded, and her once dimpling chin doubled, but her teeth and eyes were good, and she had an agreeable smile, and a generally pleasing expression of countenance.

Her size, however, was vastly exaggerated by the outrageous dimensions of the hoops sustaining her pink satin gown, which was decorated to profusion with large bows of ribbon, cords, tassels, and wreaths of flowers, and festooned with great bands of parti-coloured silks; while her stature was increased in the same ratio by a surprisingly lofty head-dress, which rose full three feet above her brows, and might have overbalanced a less substantially-built frame.

This monstrous "head," the interior of which (if we may venture to reveal the secrets of the toilette) was formed of tow, rose up smooth and straight as a wall in front, being stiffened with powder and pomatum, while the sides and back were covered with ranges of enormous curls, likewise plentifully besprinkled with powder. Some of these curls descended upon her ladyship's ample shoulders.

But we have not yet done. The towering head-dress in question, which reminds one of Queen Huncamunca's, was hung over with ropes of pearls and other jewels, decorated with ribbons in bobs and ties, and surmounted by a plume of ostrich feathers.

There seems little danger of such a mode as this being revived, but it may be well to remark, by way of caution, that, independently of the time occupied in its construction, the shape, which was calculated to last for a fortnight, could only be preserved by the wearer sleeping in a chair during the whole of the time.

Such, ladies, was a Lady Mayoress in the times of your great-grandmothers.

Separated from her mother by the Lord Mayor's chaplain, Dr Dipple,—a fat, rubicund-visaged divine, attired in cassock and band, who looked as if he did not despise the good things of this world, and had assisted at many a civic feast,—was Lady Lorimer's eldest daughter, Lady Dawes, a lively, dark-eyed, coquettish, and very pretty widow of some two or three-and-thirty. Lady Dawes's rather full figure—for her ladyship promised in due time to attain to her mother's goodly proportions—was arrayed in a polonese of garnet-coloured lustring, made very high behind, and very low in front. Open from the waist, and looped back so as to display a rich diamond-quilted petticoat, this very becoming dress was puffed at the sides with ribbons, and edged with lace. The half-moon toupee, in which form her ladyship's raven tresses—now changed in hue by powder—were arranged, suited her to a marvel.

Lady Dawes's features were by no means classical in outline. There was nothing severe or chiselled in their style. But, without being regular, they were pretty, and their expression was eminently pleasing. She was the relict of Sir John Dawes, a rich old goldsmith in Gracechurch-street, whom we suspect she must have married for his money, for he had no other recommendation, and who had died a few years before, leaving her all his treasures.

With her personal attractions and her wealth it will not be supposed that Lady Dawes lacked suitors—in fact, she had a great many—but she did not seem inclined to assume the matrimonial yoke for the second time.

The Lady Mayoress's second daughter, Mrs Chatteris, who was likewise present with her husband, Captain Chatteris, of the Honourable City Artillery—Tom Chatteris, as he was familiarly called—was also a very pretty woman, though in quite a different style from Lady Dawes, being a blonde, with soft blue eyes, a delicately fair complexion, and languishing looks. Lady Lorimer had been heard to declare that she did not know which of her two married daughters was the handsomest—she sometimes gave the palm to dearest Olivia, sometimes to dearest Chloris. But she never compared her youngest daughter, Millicent, with either of them.

Mrs Chatteris, however, was pretty enough to make any mother vain, and any husband jealous, though Tom Chatteris was very little troubled by the green-eyed monster. Provided he was allowed to flirt as much as he pleased, Tom never thought of interfering with his wife's proceedings, and this mutual good understanding being arrived at, they lived together on the best terms possible. Sir Gresham would have liked to see a little more real conjugal regard on both sides, but as Lady Lorimer assured him that dearest Chloris was perfectly happy, he was fain to be content, simply remarking that "this was not the way married folk used to live together in former days."

"Ah! but habits of life have greatly changed since our time, Sir Gresham," observed Lady Lorimer.

"So it seems," he replied, dryly; "but I am dull enough to like old manners best. I could never have borne to see any one make downright love to you, as I perceive some of those scented fops do to Chloris; and for all your pretended indifference, I don't think you would have liked me to run after every pretty woman I met, as seems to be the case with Tom Chatteris."

"I don't think I should, my dear," Lady Lorimer rejoined, quickly agitating her fan. "But *our* case is very different. *We*, you know, married from love."

"Then, you don't think people do marry from love now-a-days, eh? At all events, I hope Milly won't follow her sisters' example in that respect."

"I shall be very glad if Milly marries as well as either of them," rejoined Lady Lorimer, somewhat sharply. "Dearest Livy was the envy of all our City belles when she married that Crœsus, old Sir John Dawes—"

"Well, I can't say that was a bad match, regarded in a pecuniary point of view," Sir Gresham interrupted; "but it was entirely your making, my love."

"So it was," she rejoined. "I take the entire credit of it. And dearest Livy is greatly obliged to me, if you are not, Sir Gresham What could she desire better?"

"Why, Sir John Dawes was twelve years older than myself," cried Sir Gresham "I remember him when I was a boy and dwelling in Bucklersbury"

"Don't refer to that period, I beg of you, Sir Gresham. Sir John's years were a recommendation rather than otherwise, since they gave his wife the assurance of becoming the more speedily a widow. And he was obliging enough to gratify her, and to leave her ten thousand a year in testimony of his affection. If that can't be termed marrying well, I don't know what can."

"Well, well, my dear, I won't contradict you. Ten thousand a year is a jointure not to be despised, and Olivia may please herself, if she marries again, that's quite certain. But you can't say there were any such worldly advantages as those in Chloris's case, and you were as eager to bring about that match as the other. You know I objected to Captain Chatteris, and thought him too gay, too fond of pleasure—not quite steady enough, in short—but I suffered myself to be overruled by you."

"And very properly so, too, Sir Gresham. Where a daughter's happiness is concerned, no one is so good a judge of the means of ensuring it as a mother. Captain Chatteris and dearest Chloris seemed made for each other. You remember I said so when he danced with her at the ball at Goldsmiths' Hall, where they first met."

"I remember he was very assiduous in his attentions to you, my dear, and paid you nearly as much court as he paid Chloris."

"Mere fancy on your part, Sir Gresham. Captain Chatteris is the best-bred person I know. He has been brought up in a good school, which teaches that assiduous attention to our sex is the primary duty of man."

"The lessons he learnt at that school have not been thrown away upon him, it must be owned," laughed Sir Gresham. "He rarely fails to profit by them."

"And much to his credit if he does," Lady Gresham rejoined. "To my mind, men can never be too polite. You would be none the worse yourself, Sir Gresham, if you imitated Captain Chatteris in that respect a little. However, let that pass. Tom's agreeable manners and good looks won dearest Chloris's heart, as you know, and I could not refuse my consent to the union, though he wasn't quite so well off as might have been desired."

"Well off!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Zounds! he had less than nothing. He was over head and ears in debt."

"But he confessed his position so charmingly, and promised amendment so earnestly, that one could not fail to be pleased with him, and take him at his word. And you behaved nobly, as you always do, Sir Gresham. You not only paid his debts, but agreed to make them a handsome allowance on their marriage."

"Which they have always exceeded," observed Sir Gresham. "I hope Tom isn't in debt again. I shan't help him out of his difficulties a second time, I can promise him."

"If he owes anything 'tis a mere trifle. A few hundreds, which you will never miss, Sir Gresham, will set all right."

"Then he *is* in debt!" cried her husband, angrily. "Fire and fury! I've a good mind to turn my back upon him."

"No, you won't, Sir Gresham," she rejoined, in the coaxing tone which seldom failed in effect. "You are far too kind, too generous for that. Set him clear once more, and I'll answer for his good conduct in future."

"I won't promise anything till I know precisely how much he owes, and whom he owes it to," said Sir Gresham. "When I am satisfied on these points I will decide. But it is not merely of Tom's extravagance that I complain, but of the bad example he sets to Tradescant, who, I fear, is disposed to tread in his steps. Use all the arguments I please, I can't get the young scapegrace to attend to business."

"No wonder, Sir Gresham. Tradescant knows he is an only son, and he likewise knows you are very rich."

"Tom Chatteris takes care to impress that upon him pretty forcibly. What is more, he tries to make a fine gentleman of him, and teaches him to despise his father's business."

"Why, you wouldn't have Tradescant a draper, Sir Gresham?" cried Lady Lorimer. "Surely, you intend him for something better than that!"

"And what better could he do than follow the business which his father and grandfather have conducted before him? Zounds! I'll have none of these fine airs. Tradescant is a son of a tradesman, and ought not to be ashamed of his origin. If he is, I'm ashamed of *him*. But he *shall* attend to business. He shall be seen in the shop. He shall stand behind the counter."

"He will die first. What! our son, Tradescant, measure out a few yards of cloth for a customer! Dreadful!—not to be endured!"

"And why not?" cried Sir Gresham. "I've measured many a yard of cloth in my day, and thought it no disgrace. But times are changed now. Sons begin where fathers leave off."

"And very natural too, Sir Gresham. Don't lower your son, I beg of you, by making a tradesman of him. Indeed you may spare yourself the trouble, for I know he'll never comply. Put him in the army. Buy him a commission. His tastes are military."

"Military fiddlestick! Tom Chatteris, and be hanged to him, has put these absurd notions into his head. Our son, Lady Lorimer, is an idle, extravagant dog, and will do nothing but spend his time in frivolous amusement and dissipation."

"He is no worse than any other young man of one-and-twenty," she replied. "He may have a few faults, but he has no vices. And, indeed, you ought to be proud of him, Sir Gresham, for a finer, handsomer, nobler-spirited young fellow doesn't exist."

"He is well enough in appearance I must admit; but I would rather he was plainer in looks, and steadier in character. You are to blame for encouraging his distaste for business, and putting false notions into his head. Between you and Tom Chatteris the lad will be ruined."

"Poh! poh! nonsense! he'll be everything you could desire, if you only let him have his own way, and don't attempt to make a tradesman of him."

"You hold out but a poor prospect," observed Sir Gresham, shaking his head. "I shall have but little comfort from my family, I fear, unless it be from Millicent."

"Milly has always been your favourite," observed Lady Lorimer, with a sneer.

"And deservedly. She has ever been a good and obedient daughter. I should like to see her well married, but I had rather she never married at all, than marry as her sisters have done."

"I don't believe she will marry as well as either of them," cried Lady Lorimer. "Milly can't pretend to compare with them in personal attractions of any kind—for she is unfortunately plain, and even deficient in manners, according to my thinking."

"And pray whose fault would that be were it true, which it luckily is not?" cried Sir Gresham, angrily. "Milly is not a beauty, perhaps, like her sisters, neither has she—I am happy to say it—their manners; but she is far from plain, in my estimation at least, and I warrant me will find a good husband in time."

"Have you anybody in your eye for her, Sir Gresham?" said his lady, with a searching look.

"No," he replied. "I should never think of influencing her choice—neither will I have it influenced."

"If you refer to me, your caution is unnecessary and uncalled-for, Sir Gresham. I should never attempt to influence her. To you Milly may be obedient: to me she has always appeared self-willed and obstinate. But an offer to her is of very unlikely occurrence. I have never seen any one pay her marked attention—scarcely common civility."

"You have hitherto kept her in the background, my dear. But this must no longer be. In future I beg she may be treated as her sisters were before marriage."

"Your commands shall be obeyed, Sir Gresham—at least as far as practicable, for I don't see how a shy, retiring, silent girl, like Milly, can be brought forward. However, I'll do my best to please you. And we shall see the effect she produces—and what conquests she makes. But, unless I'm greatly mistaken, she won't go off as quickly as dearest Livy and dearest Chloris did."

The foregoing conversation occurred about six weeks before the commencement of our narrative. We have recounted it, under the impression that it may serve to give an insight into the characters of the various members of the Lord Mayor's family, as well as into his lordship's own character.

To return, however, from the digression, and complete our portrait of Mrs Chatteris, we must add that she wore a sky-blue satin sacque, which suited her fair complexion perfectly. We cannot express the same unqualified admiration of her hat, which was gigantic in size, but it was quite in the mode, and perhaps not altogether unbecoming.

A pretty woman, you will say, looks well in anything, and Mrs Chatteris would have justified the remark. Besides, if her hat was immense, it was light enough in texture, being composed chiefly of gauze, ribbons, and flowers, forming a towering structure, which was brought down very low over the forehead, and elevated at the back of the head, so as fully to exhibit the well-powdered curls, arranged in the language of the art, à la Vénus.

Both Mrs Chatteris and her elder sister, Lady Dawes, were remarkable for small feet and well-turned ankles, which were displayed to advantage by high-heeled embroidered satin shoes. Both carried fans suspended from the wrist, and both adorned their pretty cheeks with patches.

Sir Gresham's youngest daughter now only remains to be depicted. Just turned eighteen, and, therefore, in the full freshness of youth, Millicent could not be termed pretty, and yet it would be wrong to call her plain. Her beauty, such as it was, mainly consisted in fine dark eyes, jetty brows, and luxuriant raven tresses, which she had sense enough not to disfigure by powder. In this respect, as well as in simplicity of attire, she offered a very striking contrast to her showy sisters. In her mother's opinion she was stiff and ungraceful, almost ugly, stupid, shy, silent, totally devoid of spirit, and without a particle of taste.

Viewed by a father's partial eyes, she had a very pleasing countenance—whether pretty or not it puzzled him to say—neither did he greatly care, for he thought there was too much beauty already in the family, and he did not see any extraordinary advantage resulting from it. But there were moments when Millicent's rather pale features were lighted up, when her large eyes sparkled, and her lips unclosed with smiles to display the casket of pearls beneath them, that he thought her positively handsome—far handsomer, indeed, than either of his other daughters. But this, no doubt, was a mistake, and entirely attributable to his partiality. No one else discovered these beauties, because poor, retiring Millicent, who, kept in the background —"the proper place for her," Lady Lorimer said—was generally overlooked.

It cannot be denied, however, that she had a very good figure; tall, slight, and perfectly formed. Her rich dark tresses were taken back from her smooth brow so as to form a very pretty toupee of moderate size, while her profuse black locks, which, when unfastened, fell down almost to her feet, were clubbed behind, and secured by a broad pink ribbon, tied in a bow. Her gown was of dove-coloured silk, long-waisted, laced over the stomacher, and had short sleeves to the elbow, adorned with large ruffles. There was no other ornament about it. Her feet were quite as small and as pretty as those of her sisters, and this was the only point of resemblance between them.

Having thus completed the survey of the female members of our Lord Mayor's family, we will next glance at his only son, Tradescant. It will not be thought surprising that Lady Lorimer should deem it degrading in such a smart young gentleman as we are about to present, to pay any personal attention to his father's business.

Tradescant was a beau of the first water. A richly-laced maroon-coloured velvet coat, made in the extremity of the mode, with large cuffs and without collar, and a long-skirted satin waistcoat, embroidered and laced like the coat, set off his really fine person; while cobweb silk stockings of a ruby colour, and shoes with diamond buckles in them, were equally advantageous to the display of his leg and foot, of both of which the young fellow was not a little vain. Ruffles of the finest Mechlin lace, a deep frill of the same material, and a muslin cravat, completed his costume. A dishevelled peruke of flaxen hair assisted the rakish look and deportment he affected.

But for this dissipated expression, and his extreme foppery of manner, Tradescant Lorimer might have been termed a very handsome, elegant fellow; but his graces, such as they were, were all external, for though not devoid of spirit, he was shallow-pated and frivolous, devoted to pleasure, led by his equally dissolute brother-in-law, Captain Chatteris, and preyed upon and duped by his other profligate associates.

With the worst side of his son's character Sir Gresham was entirely unacquainted. He knew him to be idle and extravagant, but he did not know the sort of company he kept. He was aware that he frequented Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and Marylebone Gardens, the Opera and the theatres, and he saw no great harm in this, but he never dreamed that he haunted taverns and gaming-houses, consorted with racing-men, and betted at the cock-pit. Had these proceedings come to his father's ears, Tradescant would have felt the full weight of the old gentleman's displeasure.

Conspicuous among the party at the breakfast-table was the gay and good-looking Captain Chatteris, whose example and precepts had produced such pernicious effects upon his brother-in-law. A person of singularly fascinating manners, very lax in morals, very showy in appearance, possessed of high animal spirits, always engaged in pleasurable pursuits, Tom Chatteris was one of the most dangerous companions that any young man, constituted like Tradescant, could have found, and no wonder he was led astray. On the present occasion Tom's very handsome figure was invested in the uniform of the Honourable City Artillery, to which he belonged, and remarkably well it became him.

In addition to the Lord Mayor's chaplain, Doctor Dipple, already casually mentioned, the breakfast party comprised some five or six gentlemen, all of whom were very elegantly attired—much in the same style as Tradescant himself, whose intimates they were. All these gay-looking personages were distinguished by easy and agreeable manners, and had quite the air of men about town.

Noticeable among them—though not for good looks, for he was one of the ugliest persons imaginable, and squinted abominably—was a tall thin man of some three or four-and-thirty. He was rather more soberly attired than his companions, and had less of the air of a petit maître. Though his looks were almost forbidding, there was so much wit and drollery in his conversation, and so much mobility and expression in his features, that his ugliness was speedily forgotten. His obliquity of vision gave effect to his jests. This was no other than the well-known John Wilkes, member for Aylesbury, who afterwards became sufficiently notorious. An ardent admirer of the sex, Wilkes plumed himself upon his successes, and notwithstanding the personal disadvantages under which he laboured, there might possibly be some foundation for the boast. On the present occasion he was devoted to the beautiful Mrs Chatteris, next to whom he sat.

On the fair lady's left, and seemingly bent upon disputing Wilkes's pretensions to her favour, was the other member for Aylesbury, Mr Thomas Potter, son to an archbishop, and if good looks went for anything in such a contest, Tom Potter was sure of victory. Mrs Chatteris's sweetest smiles, however, seemed to be reserved for the ugly wit.

Lady Dawes engrossed the attentions of the Earl of Sandwich, upon whom her charms had produced a decided impression; while her fickle ladyship, intoxicated by her new conquest, scarcely deigned to notice her old admirer, Sir Thomas Stapleton.

Only two other persons require to be mentioned. These were Sir William Stanhope and Sir Francis Dashwood; the former of whom chatted gaily with the Lady Mayoress, while the latter vainly endeavoured to amuse Millicent by his prattle. All his anecdotes and court scandal failed to extract a smile from her. She felt herself quite out of place in the present company.

None of the individuals we have mentioned must be regarded as the Lord Mayor's friends; they had come thither on his son's invitation. To most of them, Tradescant's promise that his sisters, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris—the repute of whose beauty had reached them—would be present, had proved a stronger lure than the show, which he held out as the main attraction, and they readily agreed to come and breakfast with him in Cheapside at this early hour. Both Lord Sandwich and Mr Wilkes took care to let the ladies know what inducements had brought them there.

These gentlemen formed the dissolute and dangerous set to whom Tradescant had been latterly introduced by his brother-in-law, and as they were all persons of undoubted fashion, the young fellow was not a little proud of his fine acquaintances, not perceiving that they made him pay for the honour of their society. At Captain Chatteris's instance he had lately been made a member of the Dilettanti Club, held in Palace-yard, and participated in its nightly carousals and orgies.

Better acquainted than her husband with Tradescant's mode of life, Lady Lorimer was not without anxiety about him, but in some measure deluded by the representations of Captain Chatteris, and blinded by partiality, she persuaded herself his follies were the mere effervescence of youth, and would soon pass off. Then Tradescant's fine acquaintances were exactly the sort of people to impose upon her. Were not some of them persons of rank and title, and all men of high breeding, wit, and fashion? Impossible he could go far wrong amid such a set.

When the brilliant Lord Sandwich was presented to her on the morning in question, together with the captivating Sir Francis Dashwood, the handsome Tom Potter, and that drollest of mortals, Mr Wilkes, her ladyship was quite enraptured, and thought her son might well be proud of such friends.

Her two elder daughters were equally enchanted. Lady Dawes thought Lord Sandwich charming, and Mrs Chatteris, though she could not conceal from herself that Mr Wilkes was "a perfect fright," found him immensely entertaining, and far more agreeable than some handsome men—meaning his colleague, Tom Potter.

The only person, as we have intimated, who was not delighted with Tradescant's fine friends was Millicent; but this was not surprising, it being quite understood that she had neither taste nor discrimination. "Strange, I can't get a smile from her, or elicit a remark," thought Dashwood, astonished at his failure. "The girl must be an idiot. Yet she looks intelligent, and has decidedly fine eyes. What the deuce can be the matter with her?"

However, the rest of the party got on remarkably well. There was a great deal of lively conversation and merriment, and they were all laughing heartily at one of Mr Wilkes's funny stories, when the door was thrown open by the gorgeous footmen stationed outside it, and the Lord Mayor, in his scarlet and richly-furred robes, and wearing his chains and the collar of SS with a pendant jewel, entered the room.

III.

INTRODUCING THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMAN BECKFORD, AND ALDERMAN SIR FELIX BLAND.—AND SHOWING HOW HIS LORDSHIP RECEIVED A VISIT FROM A NEPHEW AND NIECE, OF WHOM HE HAD NEVER BEFORE HEARD.

The Lord Mayor looked extremely well. Tall, well proportioned, and stout, his bulkiness of person rather heightened his dignity of deportment than detracted from it. His pink cheeks, smooth-shaven and glossy, bespoke him no enemy to good cheer; but his eyes were bright, and his looks indicative of good health, and its best and surest promoters cheerfulness and kindliness of heart. Though his face was round and full, its lineaments were regular, and of the genuine English stamp. His goodly person was arrayed in a full court suit, over which he wore his robes and chain, as already mentioned. A well-powdered bag-wig completed his costume.

The Lord Mayor was accompanied by two aldermen in their robes, and by the sheriffs, Mr Nathaniel Nash, and Mr John Cartwright, likewise in their gowns and chains.

Of the aldermen, the most worthy of note was a tall, stately-looking personage, whose features, rather quick and passionate in expression, and embrowned in hue as if by warmer suns than our own, were marked by a large aquiline nose and keen penetrating eyes. This was Mr William Beckford, previously described as one of Mr Pitt's most zealous adherents. A wealthy West India merchant, one of the representatives of the City in parliament, and alderman for the Ward of Billingsgate, Mr Beckford had earned the good will of his fellow-citizens by unremitting attention to their interests both in the House and out of it, as well as by his praiseworthy endeavours to check the abuse of malt distillery, and the pernicious effects of gin-drinking. Somewhat hot in temper, no doubt owing to his West Indian origin, and apt to be overbearing in manner, Alderman Beckford could not fail to make some enemies, but those who knew him intimately, and could estimate his sterling qualities and generosity of character, admired and esteemed him. Amongst these was Sir Gresham Lorimer.

Very different from Mr Beckford was Sir Felix Bland, alderman for Bassishaw Ward, who entered the room at the same time, but at once darted forward to pay his devoirs to the Lady Mayoress and her daughters.

A stout, sleek little man, with the softest and sweetest expression of countenance and the smoothest manner, Sir Felix was profuse in compliments, and unsparing in professions of regard. Everybody with whom he claimed acquaintance—and he knew half the City—was his dearest and most valued friend. He was delighted to meet him, inquired about his wife and daughters—if he had any—and his family concerns—of which he knew but little, and cared less—with an interest that was really touching. There was something perhaps rather cloying in this unvarying sweetness of manner, and the overdose of compliments as usually administered by Sir Felix seemed to savour of insincerity, but people will stand a good deal when their self-love is flattered, and there was no resisting the smooth-spoken alderman's blandishments and the gentle pressure of his hand. Besides, he had a great many good qualities, and, apart from his adulatory manner, which brought considerable ridicule upon him, was a very amiable, estimable person.

On the entrance of the Lord Mayor all the party arose from the breakfast-table, though his lordship besought them to keep their seats, and Tradescant proceeded to present his new acquaintances to his father.

While this was going on, and Sir Gresham was affably acknowledging the ceremonious bows made to him on all sides, Sir Felix Bland, as we have stated, had flown to the ladies, and began by showering compliments upon the Lady Mayoress.

"Your ladyship looks charmingly to-day," he said, in accents of the most fervent delight, and lifting his eyes towards her towering head-dress, as if quite dazzled by its beauty; "I declare I never beheld anything more majestic and imposing. Your coiffeur—Le Gros, I presume—has done you justice. 'Tis a superb creation, and proves him to be a man of real genius in his line. But no wonder he felt inspired when he had such a head to deal with. Your ladyship knows I scorn flattery, but I cannot repress genuine admiration—as why should I? By-and-by, you will find my opinion of that ravishing head-dress confirmed by the universal rapture the sight of it will occasion. And what a day for its display! Could anything be more propitious? No fog—no rain—not even a cloud—but a sunshine worthy of June. Sure never was Lord Mayor so highly favoured as our dear Sir Gresham! But I felt it would be so. His lordship is lucky in everything, but in nothing more lucky than in the possession of the most adorable wife in the world."

"Really, Sir Felix, you quite overwhelm me," cried the Lady Mayoress, affecting confusion. "Were I younger, your compliments might turn my head. As it is, they make me feel quite vain, though I know 'tis mere flattery."

"Your ladyship does me a great injustice in taxing me with flattery. I value myself on my sincerity and candour. Thus, if your ladyship had not been dressed so divinely, and looked so bewitchingly, but had been as unbecomingly attired and as uncouth in manner as some City dames I have seen—I won't mention names—I should scarcely have hesitated to say so. But now I can assert, and without fear of contradiction, that we have a Lady Mayoress who for grace, dignity, and beauty—ay, beauty—has never yet had her peer."

"You are prodigiously polite, I vow, Sir Felix," replied the Lady Mayoress, upon whom these pretty things were not lost; "and I am charmed to win the approval of a person of so much taste and discrimination. Your encouragement will help me to get through the day. To sit in a state chariot and be gazed at by thousands, is nothing; but to receive his Majesty and the Queen, with the Princess-Dowager and their Royal Highnesses the Duke of Cumberland and the Duke of York, and the young Princes, my Lord Bute and the foreign ambassadors and ministers, I feel ready to expire when I think of it."

"Your ladyship need have no misgivings. The King is affability itself, and her Majesty is equally condescending. As to personal attractions and dignity," he added, in an under-tone, but with significance, "I won't say—though I have an opinion—whether the advantage is likely to rest with the highest lady of the Court or the highest lady in the City. One thing is quite certain," he continued, raising his voice, "if their Royal Highnesses the Duke of York and the young Princes have the taste and discernment we give them credit for, they can't fail to go away with a very exalted notion of the loveliness of some of our City dames." And he bowed as he spoke to Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris.

"There I entirely agree with you, Sir Felix," observed Lord Sandwich. "Beauty seems to have established itself in the east, and it is there we must seek it, if we would behold it in perfection."

"Very true," rejoined Sir Felix; "and your lordship must be well repaid for your voyage of discovery."

"Sir Felix, you are intolerable. You will incur my severe displeasure if you go on thus," cried Lady Dawes.

"Nay, my dear lady, you must be angry with my Lord Sandwich, and not with me. My remark was general, but he gave it a special application, though I own I think him quite right."

"What is that you are saying, Sir Felix?" inquired Tom Potter, stepping towards them.

"He is matching the City belles against our Court belles," said Lord Sandwich.

"Then I'll support him," rejoined Tom Potter; "and we needn't go beyond this room to decide the point. If the Court can show any two equal to those we can here exhibit, I will yield—but not till then. I will back Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris against all her Majesty's ladies and maids of honour for any amount that may be staked."

"Bravo! Mr Potter—bravo!" exclaimed Sir Felix. "But let us wait till to-night before making the bet."

While this talk was proceeding, the rest of the company were presented to the Lord Mayor, and by his lordship to Mr Beckford and the sheriffs.

"I am very much honoured as well as gratified by your presence on this occasion, gentlemen," said Sir Gresham, in a very urbane manner, "and I trust my son will take good care of you all. Mr Wilkes," he added to that personage, "I am particularly glad to make your acquaintance. I shall hope to see you often at the Mansion House, not as a guest merely, but as a friend."

"Your lordship does me infinite honour," replied Wilkes, bowing. "I shall not fail to profit by your very obliging invitation."

"You will always be welcome," pursued the Lord Mayor, "as will be all my son's friends. You will excuse me, I am sure, gentlemen, if I am unable to show you much personal attention now, but I am merely come to bid adieu to her ladyship before taking my place in the procession, which sets out very shortly from Guildhall."

"I quite envy your lordship," said Wilkes. "'Twill be a most triumphant day for you, and you will receive a general ovation from your fellow-citizens, who recognize in you the champion and defender of their rights. The gallant, gay Lothario—I beg his pardon; my Lord Bute I should have said—must be a bold man to face them on an occasion like the present."

"At all events, they won't welcome him as they will the minister he has supplanted, and whose laurels he would fain reap," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "The contrast will be striking, and, I hope, will convince his Majesty that he has listened unwisely to the suggestions of a counsellor who has not England's true interests and welfare at heart. Before long the terms of the Family Compact between France and Spain will be revealed, and will fully justify Pitt's prescience. But it will then be too late. We shall have lost the rich galleons which might have been ours. Had Mr Pitt's timely counsels been followed, we might have seized the Havannah, have occupied the Isthmus of Panama, and have directed an expedition thence against Manilla and the Philippine Islands."

"His Majesty must be infatuated indeed if he doesn't find out how he has been deluded and misled," rejoined Wilkes; "but as to hoping for Lothario's dismissal, I fear that is out of the question. The Princess-Dowager of Wales will not allow her confidential adviser to be turned out."

"No scandal about her Royal Highness, Mr Wilkes," interrupted the Lord Mayor, with a slight laugh. My opinion of Lord Bute is no secret. Indeed, I believe it is to the public expression of it that I am placed in my present proud position. Still, I confess I would rather occasion should not be taken on this day for humiliating him."

"You cannot help it," said Alderman Beckford; "and it is well the young King should learn the truth, though it may not be altogether palatable to him. None of his subjects are more loyal and devoted than the good citizens of London, but they detest underhand influence as much as they idolize true patriotism. Pitt will, therefore, have all their cheers to-day, and Bute their groans."

The company then mingled together, and a general conversation ensued, in the midst of which a servant in state livery entered the room, and approaching the Lord Mayor, seemed desirous of communicating something to him in private.

"What is it, Tomline?" cried Sir Gresham, not understanding the man's manner. "Speak out."

"A young man outside is very desirous of seeing your lordship," replied Tomline; "when I say a young man, I ought to state that he has a young woman with him."

"Well, well, young man or young woman, I can see neither of them now. This is not a proper moment to intrude upon me. I have no time to spare. Tell them so."

"I have already told the young man that your lordship is just going to Guildhall, but he won't be put off, and declares he will wait upon the stairs to speak to you."

"Why didn't you have the impudent rascal turned out of the house, Tomline?" cried Tradescant. Egad, I'll do it myself."

"Hold!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "He has a young woman with him. What does he want, Tomline? Did he give no name?"

"Oh yes, my lord, he gave a name, and that caused him to be admitted below. But I scarcely believed him."

"What reason had you for doubting him, sirrah?" cried the Lord Mayor, sharply. "What name did he give?"

"If I must speak out, he gave the same name as your lordship's," answered Tomline, reluctantly. "He calls himself Herbert Lorimer, and declares he is your lordship's nephew."

"My nephew!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "I never heard I had one."

"Oh! an impostor!" cried Tradescant. "I'll soon get rid of him."

"Stop!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "The young man's assertion may be true. I had two brothers, Godfrey and Lawrence, whom I have not seen for more than forty years. This Herbert, as he calls himself, may be the son of one of them, and if so, possibly the young woman may be my niece."

"Your lordship has guessed aright," observed Tomline, "supposing any reliance is to be placed upon the young man's statements."

"This relationship is a mere trumped-up story," cried Tradescant. "His lordship won't see them. Send them about their business at once, Tomline."

"Not so fast," said Sir Gresham. "I must be satisfied that it is a trick before I send them away. Let them come in, Tomline."

"Excuse me, father, but you are very wrong," said Tradescant.

"Very wrong indeed!" added the Lady Mayoress, coming up.

"I don't think so," replied the Lord Mayor; "and I am surely the best judge in a matter in which I am personally concerned."

Naturally, the incident had attracted the attention of the whole company, and when Tradescant hazarded a glance at his fashionable friends to ascertain what they thought of it, he was annoyed to perceive them laughing and whispering together. As to the Lady Mayoress, no words can describe her annoyance. She agitated her fan violently. Her elder daughters were calmer, but even they seemed disturbed.

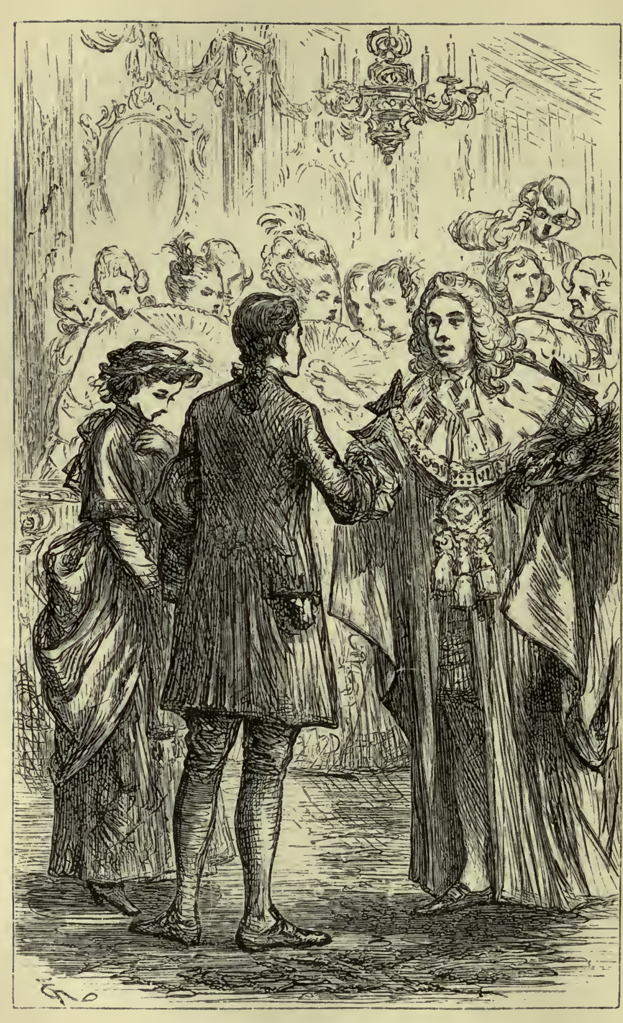
No one, however, was kept long in suspense. The door was almost instantly thrown open by Tomline, and a tall young man of some twenty or twenty-one, leading a young woman, a year or so his junior, by the hand was admitted.

The marked resemblance between them proclaimed them to be brother and sister. The habiliments of both, of plain and homely stuffs, sober in hue, and evidently of provincial make, contrasted very strongly with the attire of the gay and fashionable company into whose presence they were thus thrown. But though he might fairly have been expected to be so under the circumstances, the young man did not appear in the slightest degree abashed.

Ill displayed as it was by his badly-made apparel, his figure was a model of combined strength and symmetry. His features were handsome; his cheeks glowing with health; his eyes bright; and in place of a peruke he wore his own flowing dark-brown locks.

But if he was unawed, his sister was not so. She shrank tremblingly from the curious gaze to which she was exposed, cast down her eyes, and evidently needed all the support of her brother's strong arm to sustain her. As he could not leave her, and she seemed unwilling, indeed almost unable, to step forward, the young man remained stationary near the door.

There was a moment's pause, during which the Lord Mayor looked very hard at them. Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, and not unfavourably impressed by the looks of his newly-discovered relatives, he advanced towards them,



"HERE'S MY HAND, HERBERT."

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and addressing the young man in a very kindly tone, said, "So, sir, you call yourself my nephew, eh?"

"Yes, my lord. I am Herbert Lorimer, son of your brother Godfrey, and this is my sister Prue."

"Herbert, eh! Prue, ah! Well, well, I don't doubt what you tell me. I can't doubt it, for you're both as like your father as can well be. Here's my hand, Herbert—here's my hand. Glad to see you both—very glad. Look up, child! Look up, that I may see your eyes. Ay, there it is—that's Godfrey's expression. I haven't forgotten it, though well-nigh half a century has elapsed since I beheld him last. And how is he?—how is my brother?"

"Alas! my lord, he died some years ago at York," replied Herbert. "Prue and I are alone in the world."

"No, not alone, since you have found your uncle out. But why didn't you come to me sooner? And why, above all, choose a time like the present for making yourselves known?"

"We only arrived in town yesterday from York, uncle," said Prue. "I told Herbert our visit to-day would be very inopportune and improper, but he wouldn't be dissuaded. He said you would be glad to see us."

"And he was right," returned Sir Gresham; 'but I should have been better pleased if you had come before. How was it you never wrote to me, or conveyed to me any tidings of your father's decease, or your own existence? How was I to know I had a nephew or niece if I never heard of them?"

"All this requires explanation, which you shall have at the fitting moment, uncle," replied Herbert. "I have much to relate—much that will pain you to hear."

"Well, I've no time to listen to it now. Was ever Lord Mayor thus bothered when about to join his procession?"

"You hear that, Herbert," said Prue. "Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"No, not at all," he replied. "Since I've seen my uncle, and spoken to him, I'm quite content. So now, my lord, we humbly take our leave. Come along, Prue."

"Stay! stay!" cried Sir Gresham; "I must present you both to your aunt, the Lady Mayoress, and your cousins. You mustn't go away—you must spend the day here."

"But we shan't know what to do with them," whispered the Lady Mayoress. "Better let them go."

"Impossible! I couldn't do such a thing," rejoined Sir Gresham. "These are my poor brother Godfrey's children. I'm sure your ladyship will give them a hearty welcome."

"Your lordship's nephew and niece must of course be welcome," rejoined the Lady Mayoress, in a cold tone, and without extending a hand to either of them. "I wish they had stayed at York," she added to herself. "I wonder what brought them here."

Seeing the effect produced upon her by this haughty reception, Sir Gresham took his niece's trembling hand, and led her towards his two elder daughters, both of whom made her a very distant and formal courtesy, after which they turned their backs upon her. Millicent, however, received her with great affection, and strove by her warmth of manner to efface the painful impression produced upon her by her sisters.

Tradescant was equally rude to Herbert, and scarcely deigned to notice him when his father introduced him. Captain Chatteris was still more impertinent, and placed the breakfast-table between himself and the young man when the latter was brought towards him. Herbert's cheek was instantly in a flame, and he marched up to his sister.

"Come, let us go, Prue," he cried. "You said we should be unwelcome guests, but I didn't believe you. I was wrong to come here, and you were right in advising me to keep away. I didn't expect to be insulted in the house of my father's brother."

"Nor shall you be," rejoined the Lord Mayor, catching his arm. "Stay—I command you."

"Oh! pray stop, Herbert," implored Prue. "You won't disobey your uncle."

"Certainly not," replied the young man, halting.

"Hear me," cried Sir Gresham, glancing angrily round, "I won't have my relatives rudely treated. I am not ashamed to own before all this company that I have risen from nothing—that I have gained the proud position I now occupy solely by my own exertions—"

"Oh! pray papa, don't say any more!" cried Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris together.

"Forty years ago," pursued the Lord Mayor, disregarding their entreaties, "my prospects were no better than my nephew's in all probability are, and knowing how much I needed a helping-hand then, I shan't refuse him one now. On this day, above all others, I ought to be influenced by feelings of thankfulness and kindliness, since I have obtained all I aspired at, and far more than my deserts."

"Oh! Sir Gresham, I shall expire if you go on in this manner!" the Lady Mayoress exclaimed. "Consider, we are not alone."

"That's the very reason I speak out," continued Sir Gresham. "I wish everybody to know I am not ashamed of my origin. I have an honest pride in referring to it. 'Tis one of the greatest privileges of the high office I now hold, that its qualifications are not exalted birth, or interest, but the good opinion and esteem of one's fellow-citizens. These I have won, or I should not wear these robes to-day. But I should be unworthy of my office if I could forget my former position—if I could look coldly on my brother's children. I bid them heartily welcome. All who love me, and respect me, will follow my example. Nephew and niece, I am very glad to see you—and so is her ladyship—aren't you?"

"Delighted—since you will have it so, Sir Gresham," the Lady Mayoress replied, trying to control her vexation.

"And so are my daughters, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris—are you not, my dears?" pursued Sir Gresham.

But the ladies in question made no reply, but turned up their noses disdainfully.

"Tradescant," continued Sir Gresham, "I insist upon your shaking hands with your cousin Herbert."

"I am bound to obey you, father," replied the young man, reluctantly complying with the injunction.

Seeing what was going on, and thinking he might be called upon next, Captain Chatteris sedulously applied himself to the viands on the table, and declined to look up. Millicent, however, did not require to have orders given her, for she said,

"I am very glad to see my cousins, and I am sure Prue and I shall become great friends."

"I am quite sure of it," replied her cousin, with a grateful smile.

"One word before I go, Herbert," demanded the Lord

Mayor. "What are your habits? What have you done? What are you fit for?"

"I can scarcely answer your questions, uncle," returned the young man, modestly. "But my habits are regular, and I am accustomed to business."

"Business—ha! Glad to hear it. What business?"

"My brother has just served his apprenticeship to Mr Hornby, the mercer near the Micklegate, in York, uncle," interposed Prue; "and he has come to town, hoping you might befriend him. He has a letter of recommendation to you from Mr Hornby. Give it to your uncle, Herbert."

"Not now," replied the Lord Mayor—"not now. If I find all as you represent it, Herbert, and you are not too proud, as some youngsters now-a-days are"—glancing at Tradescant—"to stand behind a counter and attend to a customer, I'll place you in my shop."

"Good gracious, Sir Gresham, don't talk about the shop now!" cried the Lady Mayoress, with a look of dismay.

"I'll place you in my shop and give you the management of it, and if you satisfy me, on next Lord Mayor's Day I'll take you into partnership; and then it'll be your own fault if you aren't Lord Mayor yourself hereafter."

"Well done, my lord!" cried Alderman Beckford. "You have acted nobly. The City may well be proud of you."

"That it may indeed!" exclaimed Sir Felix Bland, while the room resounded with similar expressions of approval.

"I shall endeavour by my conduct to merit your goodness, uncle," said Herbert, with a look of profound gratitude.

Prue could not speak, but her moistened eyes showed how much moved she was by Sir Gresham's generosity.

At this moment, as if the crowd in Cheapside had known what was occurring, and desired to express their sympathy, loud shouts were heard, with which the Lord Mayor's name was mingled.

Immediately afterwards the door was thrown open by two servants in state liveries, and the sword-bearer, the common crier with the mace, the water-bailiff, and other gentlemen of the Lord Mayor's household, were seen standing outside. All these personages were in their full habiliments of office. Two gentlemen in court suits, who were provided with white wands, and acted as ushers, then stepped in, and, making an obeisance to the Lord Mayor, intimated to him that his carriage was waiting.

On this, Sir Gresham bowed courteously around, and, being joined by his chaplain, quitted the room, followed by the two aldermen and the sheriffs.

As he descended the stairs, preceded by the sword-bearer and the mace-bearer, and passed through the lines of servants, trumpets were sounded to announce his coming forth.

The military band stationed in Cheapside began to play, and amid the cheers of all who could obtain a sight of him, accompanied by the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, the Lord Mayor entered his magnificent state-coach, to which six splendid iron-grey horses, richly caparisoned, and decorated with ribbons, were harnessed.

IV.

GUILDHALL—PAST AND PRESENT.

While our Lord Mayor is on the way to Guildhall, in his grand state-coach drawn by six horses, we will proceed thither before him, and enter the great hall.

From its magnitude and the character of its architecture, this time-honoured hall, now four centuries and a half old, and fraught with a multitude of historical recollections, cannot fail to command admiration under whatever circumstances it may be viewed.

It is one hundred and fifty-two feet long, fifty broad, and fifty-five high, and its size may be estimated from the fact that it will hold, and indeed *did* hold on the occasion of the grand entertainment about to be described, upwards of seven thousand persons.

The hall was the first part of the edifice erected. Begun in 1411, in the reign of Henry IV., by Thomas Knolles, then Mayor, its walls were so solidly constructed that they withstood the ravages of the Great Fire of London.

It is delightful to reflect that the renowned Sir Richard Whittington, the first favourite of our boyhood, can be associated with this vast chamber, as he no doubt superintended its construction, witnessed its completion, traversed it almost daily, and constantly sat within it, during his third and last mayoralty, in 1419. That he loved it is certain, since his executors, only three years later—alas! that he should have gone so soon!—in fulfilment of his bequest, contributed a sum of money towards paving the floor with "hard stone of Purbeck," glazing its windows, as well as those of the Mayor's courts, and embellishing them with his arms.

What scenes has not this storied hall witnessed since Whittington's day! But though many a worthy Mayor has occupied it since, none worthier than he has ever set foot within it.

In process of time many courts and chambers, required by the various municipal officers, were added to the hall, but we shall not tarry to describe them, but come at once to the year 1501, when a grand desideratum was supplied by Sir John Shaw, goldsmith, then Lord Mayor, whose memory deserves to be held in profound respect by all convivial citizens.

Sir John Shaw—we have pleasure in repeating his name—built a goodly kitchen, with large fire-places, capable of furnishing prodigious banquets, and from that date the famous Corporation feasts commenced. With three hundred and sixty grand banquets before us, are we wrong in maintaining that Sir John Shaw's name ought to be venerated? We regret, however, to add, that this fine old kitchen, which, when Lord Mayors' dinners were dressed "at home," was found equal to an unlimited demand upon its resources, has since been converted to other and less hospitable uses.

In the ill-omened year 1666, when so many ancient structures perished, Guildhall was invaded by the tremendous conflagration which then devastated the City, and its beautiful Gothic open-work timber roof, with carved pendants, resembling the roof of Westminster Hall, and other combustible parts of the building, were entirely consumed.

The solidity, however, of the masonry—the walls being six or seven feet in thickness—saved the bulk of the edifice, and within three years afterwards it was restored at a cost of £2500—restored, though not to its pristine beauty. The rich stained glass of olden days could not be brought back to its mullioned windows; the fine arched timber roof could not be replaced; and an architectural taste true as that which furnished its original design did not superintend its reconstruction.

But if fault must be found with certain portions of the interior; if we cannot admire the present flat roof divided into panels, or the mean windows disfiguring the upper storey, what must be said of the exterior of the structure, which, in 1790, was bereft of all its venerable character, and a frontage substituted equally anomalous and tasteless, which has been very properly described "as an abortive attempt to blend the Pointed style with the Grecian, and both with the East Indian manner"? On this façade is inscribed the civic motto, "*Domine dirige nos*," which has been construed as a prayer from the Corporation to be better guided in future in their choice of an architect.

But though there are drawbacks to the completeness of the interior of the great hall, these are lost in its general grandeur and beauty. The mighty pointed arched windows at the east and west, occupying almost the entire width of the chamber, with their mullions, mouldings, and tracery, are exceedingly fine, though it is to be wished that the old, deep-dyed glass could be restored; it being infinitely preferable to the garish panes flaring with royal arms, orders of the Garter, &c., with which the upper compartments are at present filled. At the sides are large and lofty pointed windows, several of which have been unfortunately blocked up by cenotaphs, but the clustered demi-pillars between them, and the arcades beneath, are of great beauty. Above the capitals of the pillars are shields emblazoned with the arms of the City companies. On the north-eastward pillar are the arms of England, and on the south-eastward pillar the arms of the City of London.

Beneath the great eastern window is the ancient dais, on which a platform is set, raised some feet above the pavement, and partitioned from the body of the hall by a wainscoted traverse. Here the Courts of Hustings are held, occasionally the Court of Exchequer, and here the City elections are conducted. At the rear of the dais, and beneath the great window, may be seen a range of exquisitely wrought niche canopies. Similar canopies, but of modern execution, will be found at the other end of the hall.

Several of the windows on the north side, as already remarked, are now closed by large marble cenotaphs reared by the City in commemoration of distinguished persons. Amongst these memorials is one devoted to a personage mentioned in our story, Alderman Beckford, who was twice Lord Mayor of London, and whose famous speech to George III., in answer to his Majesty's unfavourable reception of a Remonstrance from the Corporation in 1770, is recorded upon the pedestal.

Pennant describes this monument as "a marble group of good workmanship, with London and Commerce whimpering like two marred children, executed soon after the year 1770 by Mr Bacon. The principal figure (Beckford) was also a giant in his day, the raw-head and bloody bones to the good folks in St James's; which, while Remonstrances were in fashion, annually haunted the court in terrific forms." Here is also the monument by Bacon, and a noble work it is, of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, who will likewise figure in these pages. Opposite the sculptured memorial of the greatest of our statesmen and orators is the cenotaph of his illustrious son, the inheritor of his high qualities. Here also are monuments of the heroes of Trafalgar and Waterloo.

But we must now examine two well-known occupants of the hall. In opposite angles, at the west end, and upon octagonal columns, stand the two guardian giants, yclept Gog and Magog.

Old Strype pretends that these mysterious figures represent an ancient Briton and a Saxon, and some believe them to be of no greater antiquity than Charles the Second's day; but we reject these notions altogether. Their origin is buried in obscurity. We suspect they were fashioned by Merlin, or some equally potent enchanter. If they were tried by the Great Fire, they came out of it unscathed. Gog is armed with a halberd, and Magog with a poleaxe, from which hangs a ball set round with spikes. Their mighty limbs, grotesque attire, bushy black beards, penthouse-like brows overshadowing great protruding eyes, which seem ever disposed to wink at you, and wondrous lineaments in which ferocity is so happily blended with joviality and merriment, must be familiar to all.

Familiar also is the veracious legend connected with them. We all devoutly believe, that at dead of night, when the clock strikes one, these marvellous images become suddenly instinct with life, and, leaping down upon the pavement, look out for supper, regaling themselves upon whatever eatables and drinkables they may be lucky enough to meet with, searching for a terrified apprentice in the Little Ease, and sometimes, when hard pressed, devouring a beadle, great-coat, three-cornered hat, staff and all.

Space is wanting at this moment, but in the course of our story we hope to find occasion to recount another legend of the two gigantic hall-keepers, equally as veracious as the foregoing, and not so generally known.

At the period of our tale, however, the giants did not occupy their present position, but were far better placed on the north side of the hall, exactly were Alderman Beckford's cenotaph is now fixed. Here was the old entrance to the Lord Mayor's Court. Over the steps conducting to it was a large balcony, supported by four iron pillars, shaped like palm-trees, the branches and foliage of which formed a sort of arbour.

In front of this picturesque-looking balcony was a curious old clock with three dials, set in an oaken frame; at the corners were carved the four cardinal Virtues; and on the top the figure of Time, with a cock on either side. On brackets at the right and left of the steps were placed Gog and Magog; thus establishing, as will at once be perceived, a mysterious connection between them and the clock.

But the old entrance is now walled up; the picturesque balcony with the palm-trees is swept away; and the quaint old clock is gone. How the jovial giants must long for it back again!

At the sides of the steps, and in somewhat too close proximity to the gigantic guardians, were two cells, denominated, from their narrow limits and the lowness of the ceiling, "Little Ease," in which unruly apprentices were occasionally confined by order of the City Chamberlain, where, if the offenders were detained during the night, the giants were sure to find them out, battering at the cell doors with halberd and poleaxe, and bellowing fearfully while trying to get at them. We may be sure that the scared apprentices did not require a second night in the Little Ease.

Underneath the great hall is a crypt of extraordinary architectural beauty, and in excellent preservation, corresponding in size with the superstructure.

Ordinarily, at the period of our tale—though just now all the pictures had been removed in anticipation of the grand banquet—the walls of the great hall were adorned with many portraits of royal and judicial personages. Amongst the former were William and Mary, Anne, and the two Georges. The reigning sovereign, George III., and his consort, were added after their visit to the City, about to be described. The judges, looking all alike in their red robes and monstrous wigs, were sixteen in number, and comprised the learned Sir Matthew Hale, Sir Heneage Finch, Sir Orlando Bridgman, Sir Robert Atkins, and others of their contemporaries, painted in the time of Charles II. At a later date Chief Justice Pratt, afterwards Lord Chancellor Camden, was added to the list.

Amongst the decorations of the hall were the colours and standards taken at Ramilies, with other trophies of subsequent victories.

In Guildhall, as is well known, all the municipal business is transacted, and here the nine civic courts are held. But these it does not come within our province to describe. Many historical recollections are connected with the spot. Shakspeare, following the old chronicler Hall, alludes to one event in "Richard III." Buckingham, we may remember, is ordered to follow the Lord Mayor. Thus cries the wily Gloster:

> Go after, after, cousin Buckingham,
> The Mayor towards Guildhall hies him in all post.

Whereunto the Duke replies:

> I go; and towards three or four o'clock,
> Look for the news that the Guildhall affords.

His persuasions, however, though seconded by the Lord Mayor and the Recorder, only prevailed upon some few of the "tongueless blocks" to shout

> God save Richard, England's royal king!

Here the martyred Anne Askew was tried for heresy, and sentenced to the stake. Here the chivalrous and accomplished Surrey—the latest victim of the tyrant Henry—was arraigned, and found guilty of high treason. Here Sir Nicholas Throckmorton was tried, in the reign of Mary, for conspiring with others against the queen's life; and here in the reign of James I., Garnet, one of the chief contrivers of the Gunpowder Plot, was condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

But preferring the more cheerful side of the picture, we would rather regard the hall as the scene of grand civic entertainments than as a court of justice. It affords us pleasure, therefore, to mention that, in 1612, when the Elector-Palatine, Frederic, came to England to espouse the Princess Elizabeth, only daughter of James I., he and the king were sumptuously entertained by the Lord Mayor; and the Prince-Palatine was presented by his lordship, in the name of the citizens, with an immense silver basin and ewer, and two large silver flagons, richly gilt. On the wedding-day the Corporation presented the electoral bride with a superb necklace of Oriental pearls, valued at two thousand pounds. Again, on the return of the unfortunate king, Charles I., from Scotland, in 1641, a magnificent banquet was offered him by the municipal body at Guildhall, and so delighted was the monarch by their professions of duty, affection, and loyalty, that he created the Lord Mayor a baronet, and dubbed all the aldermen knights.

But it is in the knowledge that it belongs to the wealthiest and most powerful body corporate in the world that the contemplation of Guildhall becomes chiefly impressive. When we consider how well, and for what a lengthened term of years, the vast and complicated business of the city of London has been here conducted, we cannot but wonder that generations of men have been found of such energy and worth as those who have carried on the mighty machinery, and have raised the City, for which they have toiled and striven, to the proud position it now occupies. Abuses may have crept in—abuses which may be easily remedied—but the operations of the great municipal institution have been little affected.

From the days of Whittington, in whose life-time this noble hall was founded, to our own day, what myriads of active merchants and traders, what Mayors, Aldermen, Common-councilmen, and other officials have assembled to administer the affairs of their fellow-citizens and uphold their privileges and immunities. Dynasties have changed during this long term, governments have fallen, but the municipal government of the City of London remains the same. What inexhaustible resources have the City rulers ever found—how equal have they been to every emergency—how much munificence have they displayed—how faithful have they been to their trust—how irreproachable in conduct! With what unstinting hands have they dispensed the City charities—how strictly administered its justice! By an honourable course like this, pursued for centuries, has the Corporation of London advanced our City to its present greatness. Long may it continue in such good hands! Long may it be governed so wisely and so well!

The remembrance of the multitudes of good men, honest traders, prudent, liberal, generous, enlightened, charitable benefactors to their fellow-citizens, and upright magistrates, who have peopled this great hall, and have passed away, fills the breast with emotions at once grave and gladsome. We think upon those who are gone; but rejoice that many good men are still left us.

And now, having completed our hasty survey of the interior, let us examine the exterior of the edifice.

It has been stated that in 1790 the present tasteless façade of the hall was erected, the design of which is described by Malcolm as "neither Grecian, Saxon, Norman, simple nor florid Gothic, though it approaches nearer to the latter style than any of the former."

But it is not with the existing aspect of the structure, but with that presented by it at the period of our story, which we have to do. At that time the frontage was really Gothic in design, and had a grey and venerable air, though the entire length of the pile could not be discerned, owing to the encroachments of the buildings on either side of the court.

The stately porch then projected some yards beyond the main edifice, adding thereby greatly to its effect. The entrance was formed by a noble pointed arch supported by columns, the spandrels being enriched with arms and tracery. On either side were shields, and above them niches occupied by statues. Over the porch was an upper storey, with a balcony, beneath which were depicted the arms of the City companies, while at the back were niches wherein were placed figures of Moses and Aaron. The whole was surmounted by a cornice, on which, in *bas relief*, the arms of England were boldly displayed. Embattled turrets, with vanes, stood at each angle of the roof, and these turrets are still left.

If Guildhall could be perfectly restored, and the buildings intruding upon it removed, it would be one of the noblest specimens of architecture in the City. But this is not to be hoped for.

On the west side of the yard there was a long colonnade, or piazza, and above this pleasant covered walk, removed during the reparations of 1789, were the offices of the Common Serjeant, the Remembrancer, and the City Solicitor.

The south-west corner was occupied by the old parish church of St Lawrence in the Jewry, which remains pretty much in the same condition as heretofore. On the other side of the yard was Guildhall Chapel, a venerable pile, founded at the latter end of the thirteenth century, and damaged, though not burnt down, by the dread calamity of 1666. The west front, which faced the court, was adorned with a large pointed arched window, and with niches containing statues of Edward VI., Elizabeth, and Charles I., treading on a globe. This fine old edifice was pulled down in 1822 to make room for the new Law Courts.

Contiguous to the chapel on the south was Blackwell Hall, originally called Basing's Haugh, a very ancient structure, destroyed by the Great Fire, and rebuilt in 1672. It had a spacious entrance into Guildhall-yard, and the doorway was adorned with columns, with an entablature and pediment displaying the arms of England, and a little lower the City arms.

From this hasty survey, it will be seen that the stately Gothic porch, then advancing far beyond the body of the old hall, which still retained much of its original character, the piazza on the west side of the court, the ancient chapel with its magnificent window and statues, together with Blackwell Hall on the opposite side, combined to produce an effective ensemble, totally wanting to the existing court and edifice.

Such was Guildhall during the mayoralty of Sir Gresham Lorimer.

V.

HOW THREE COURT BEAUTIES CAME TO GUILDHALL, AND HOW THEY FARED ON THEIR ARRIVAL.

The gorgeous state-coach, in which our Lord Mayor rode, still exists, and constitutes a principal feature in the annual civic show.

Since good Sir Gresham's day, a hundred Lord Mayors have ridden in it, and we hope it may serve to convey a hundred more to Westminster and back. Though richly gilt and burnished, it is not gaudy, but has a grand, imposing, courtly appearance, and seems fitted for the City sovereign, or for any other sovereign. Indeed, it formed the model for the royal state-coach—still likewise in use—constructed for George III. in 1762. Built about four or five years previous to the date of our story, in the somewhat cumbrous but handsome style of the day, hung very low, having large windows calculated to afford a full view of those inside it, panels covered with exquisitely painted emblematical designs and elaborately carved woodwork, representing Cupids sustaining the City arms, this state-coach, by its antiquated air and splendour, carries back the mind to another age.

The paintings on the panels, replete with grace and elegance, are by Cipriani; that on the right door exhibits Fame presenting the Mayor to the genius of the City; while on the other door is depicted Britannia pointing with her spear to the shield of Henry Fitz-Alwin, the first Mayor of London, who enjoyed his office for the long term of twenty-four years—namely, from the first of Richard I. to the fifteenth of John.

Until of late years the roof of this magnificent carriage was surmounted by a carved group of boys supporting baskets of fruit, but an accident deprived it of this ornament. The original cost of the coach was upwards of a thousand pounds, which will not appear surprising, when its size and the splendour of its decorations and fittings are taken into account. The expense of keeping it in repair is by no means trifling, but this is now borne by the Corporation, whose property the coach has become.

According to custom, the Lord Mayor's companions were his chaplain, Dr Dipple; the sword-bearer, Mr Heron Powney, who carried his weapon according to the rule of armoury, "upright, the hilts being holden under his bulk, and the blade directly up the midst of his breast, and so forth between his brows;" the common-crier, Mr Roberts, with the mace; and the water-bailiff, Mr Dawson. The latter gentlemen were in their official robes.

The six proudly-caparisoned horses were put in motion by a couple of clean-limbed, active-looking postilions, wearing jackets stiffened with lace, tight buckskins, and great jack-boots, black velvet caps with far-projecting nebs, and adorned with the Lord Mayor's crest wrought in silver, and carrying riding-whips with heavy silver handles. The reins were held by a coachman worthy of the occasion. No one in the Lord Mayor's household had a higher sense of the importance of his post, or greater determination to uphold its dignity, than his lordship's head-coachman, Mr Caleb Keck. On this day all other coachmen were beneath him. He would have taken precedence of the royal coachman—just as the Lord Mayor would have done of royalty itself, east of Temple-bar.

A very large man was Mr Keck, as darkly red as a mulberry about the cheeks and gills, and the purple dye of his broad, bluff countenance was deepened by contrast with his flaxen wig. Nothing could be more imposing than his appearance as he sat on the hammercloth, which was not much too wide for him, in his laced three-cornered hat and state livery, with a large bouquet on his breast, buckles ornamented with paste brilliants on his shoes, and his great balustrade calves encased in pearl-coloured silk stockings. Neither the six tall footmen clustering behind the carriage, each as fine as fine clothes could make him, and each consequential enough for a lord, nor the splendidly arrayed postilions, were to be compared to him.

Guided by Mr Keck and the postilions, the Lord

Mayor's coach passed across Cheapside amid the acclamations of the multitude, and made its way, though slowly and with difficulty, through the throng of equipages already described as encumbering New King-street, in the direction of Guildhall, the Gothic façade of which agreeably terminated the vista.

Close behind came the superb state chariots of the sheriffs, each drawn by four horses, and the carriages of Alderman Beckford and Sir Felix Bland.

While Sir Gresham was acknowledging the cheers and congratulations that greeted him from lookers-on from window and house-top, as he passed along, Mr Keck frowned in an awful manner at any familiar observation that might chance to be addressed to him by a brother coachman, and, if it had been consistent with his dignity to open his lips at all, would have sworn lustily in return.

Cateaton-street was crossed without hindrance, while loud clappings of hands and vociferations proceeded from a stand erected by the Merchant Tailors near the old church of Saint Lawrence in the Jewry, and decorated with the company's banners.

In the midst of these huzzas, the Lord Mayor was borne into Guildhall-yard, which, being thronged by various personages connected with the procession, presented a very animated and picturesque appearance, and his carriage drew up before the gaily ornamented entrance of a temporary covered way, erected for the convenience of the illustrious visitors expected that evening, and leading from the middle of the yard to the great hall-porch.

No carriages, except those of the late Lord Mayor and the sheriffs, were allowed to stand in Guildhall-yard, but a line of equipages belonging to the aldermen, the chief City officers, the wardens and prime-wardens of the different City companies, extended thence, through Blackwell Hall, far into Bishopsgate-street. The court, however, was thronged by persons on foot, with whom a few others on horseback were intermingled.

Amongst the latter the most conspicuous were the two City marshals; the upper marshal being mounted on a proudly caparisoned steed, arrayed in a grand military uniform, with long jack-boots, glittering breastplate, flowing Ramilies peruke, and feathered hat. In his hand he bore a long bâton, the badge of his office. The under marshal was scarcely less splendidly attired. With them were a host of standard-bearers, trumpeters, and yeomen of the guard. Some of the standard-bearers were mounted.

In front of the chapel stood the bargemaster of the Merchant Tailors' Company—to which ancient and important fraternity, it will be remembered, our Lord Mayor belonged—in his state dress, the watermen in their scarlet and puce liveries, and the beadle in his scarlet gown.

On the other side of the yard, within the piazzas previously described, were ranged sixty poor men, habited in the scarlet and puce gowns and hoods of the Merchant Tailors' Company, bearing shields charged with the arms of the Company, namely, a tent royal between two parliament robes, and on a chief azure a lion of England, with a holy lamb as a crest, and two camels as supporters. These sixty poor men, corresponding in number with the Lord Mayor's age, were intended to lead the procession.

One circumstance must be mentioned, as it not only added materially to the crowded state of the court, but was productive of considerable inconvenience to the various officials collected within it. The management of the grand entertainment had been confided to a committee of seven aldermen, of which Mr Beckford and Sir Felix Bland were members. By favour of this committee private admittance was given to the galleries erected within the great hall to a number of ladies of quality, and to the wives and daughters of such wealthy and important citizens as had interest enough to procure tickets.

As early as nine o'clock, in order to secure the best places, these privileged ladies began to arrive, some in court dresses with plumes and diamonds, and all in rich evening attire of silk and satin. Wonderful were the coiffures to be seen!—some of them almost rivalling the towering magnificence of the Lady Mayoress's "head"—some being arranged *à la Cybèle*, others *à la Gorgonne*, or *à la Vénus*. From the early hour we have mentioned until the arrival of the Lord Mayor, a constant succession of carriages, hackney-coaches, and sedan-chairs had been setting down before the entrance to the covered passage, discharging their freights of silks and satins, hoops, lace, feathers, and other finery, and then making their way back as well as they could.

In his over-desire to oblige his friends, Sir Felix Bland had given away a great many more tickets than he ought to have done, and the consequence was, that the galleries were crowded before any of the ladies belonging to the common-councilmen had been admitted.

The entrance to the covered way before which the Lord Mayor had stopped was decorated with flags and banners, surmounted by the royal arms, with the City arms beneath. Inside was a bar. The passage was of considerable extent, lined with crimson cloth, carpeted, festooned with garlands of artificial flowers, and hung with a profusion of coloured lamps. Preparations, indeed, had been made for generally illuminating the place at night.

Outside, the entrance to the covered way could be brilliantly lighted up, while the whole front of the adjacent hall, together with the buildings on either side of the court, were covered with variegated lamps arranged in graceful devices, calculated to produce a very brilliant effect.

The interior of the noble Gothic porch, to which the passage conducted, had quite lost its original character, its architectural beauties being hidden by crimson cloth with which the walls were draped. It had now all the appearance of a modern ante-room, or rather a conservatory, being filled with flowering shrubs and exotics. Nothing could be seen of the arch crossing its centre, supported by columns, of its paneled tracery with quatrefoil turns, of the variously sculptured and gilt bosses at the intersections of its groined roof, or of the shield displaying the arms of Edward the Confessor. But though these beauties were shrouded for the moment, much comfort was gained, and it must be owned that the vestibule had a very charming appearance. The shrubs and exotics, which formed a beautiful arbour, were carried on to the great hall beyond, and were adorned with variegated lamps, the effect of which, when lighted up, was really magical.

The stoppage of the state-coach before the door of the covered passage summoned forth three of the aldermen, members of the committee, in their gowns, to receive his lordship as he alighted. They were accompanied by half a dozen common-councilmen in mazarine blue gowns—whence they obtained the nickname of "Mazarines," then commonly applied to them.

Attended by the aldermen, with his train borne by a page, and preceded by the sword-bearer and mace-bearer, the Lord Mayor traversed the passage until he reached the porch, where several City officials, in their robes, gowns, and bob-majors, were waiting to receive him. Amongst these were Sir Thomas Harrison, the Chamberlain; Sir Richard Moreton, the Recorder; Mr Roberts, junior, the City Remembrancer; and Mr James Chamness, the Chief Huntsman of the City, ordinarily styled the Common Hunt, the City Solicitor, the Comptroller, the two Secondaries, and the Town Clerk.

Behind, at a respectful distance, stood Mr Towse, the Chief Carver, an enormously stout man, who looked as if he could stow half a baron of beef beneath his capacious waistcoat, and who might have personated one of the giants of the neighbouring hall without stuffing. Mr Towse was attended by three sergeant-carvers, almost as broad across the shoulders and as round about the waist as himself. The sergeant-carvers were habited in the costume of Henry the Eighth's time.

A little farther to the rear of these robustious personages, and drawn up in lines, stood three sergeants of the chamber and two yeomen of the chamber, with the sword-bearer's man, the common-crier's man, the beadles, and other attendants.

While Sir Gresham was conferring with the Recorder and Chamberlain, the party was increased by the arrival of the sheriffs, Alderman Beckford, Sir Felix Bland, and the late Lord Mayor. Sir Matthew Blakiston was somewhat past the middle term of life, though there were few marks of age about him. He was stout of person as beseemed a civic dignitary, and possessed a pleasant countenance and urbane manners. Add to these recommendations great liberality and hospitality, and it will not be wondered at that Sir Matthew's mayoralty had been popular.

Some little discussion being requisite with the members of the committee as to the arrangements of the day, the Lord Mayor, in order to be more at his ease, took off his gown, leaving it with his attendants, but he was still in the vestibule, engaged in conversation with Mr Beckford, when three ladies, evidently of high rank, resplendent with diamonds, and distinguished alike for grace, beauty, and magnificence of attire, were seen advancing along the passage, preceded by two ushers, carrying white wands.

"Whom have we here?" exclaimed Alderman Beckford. "Unless my eyes deceive me, these are three of our chief court beauties—the Duchess of Richmond, Lady Kildare, and Lady Pembroke. They have come early."

"I begged them to do so," cried Sir Felix Bland, transported with delight at the appearance of the ladies. "I said it would be impossible to keep places after twelve o'clock, when the great rush would commence; but up to that hour I would promise them front seats."

"You promised more than you can perform, Sir Felix," exclaimed a common-councilman, coming forward. "All the front places are gone."

"What! gone already, Mr Judkins?" said the Lord Mayor. How comes that to pass?"

"It is all Sir Felix's fault, my lord," rejoined the angry Mazarine. "He has given away a couple of hundred tickets more than he ought to have done. None of our own ladies can be accommodated. There'll be pretty work with them by-and-by."

"Odds bobs! I hope not," rejoined Sir Gresham. "All disturbance must be avoided, if possible. Meantime, the duchess, and the noble ladies with her, must have places assigned them."

"I don't very well see how that can be accomplished, my lord," rejoined Judkins.

"But I tell you it *must* be done, sir," rejoined the Lord Mayor, authoritatively. "About it at once."

These remarks did not reach the ears of Sir Felix. Hurrying off, he was by this time bowing to the ground before the superb Duchess of Richmond, after which he addressed similar profound obeisances to her grace's lovely companions. So enraptured were his looks, so obsequious was his manner, so high-flown were his compliments, that Lady Pembroke spread her fan before her face to hide her laughter.

"How fortunate I chanced to be here at the moment of your arrival," he exclaimed, "that I may have the honour and happiness of escorting your grace and their ladyships—

three graces, if I may venture to use the phrase—to your seats. How amiable of you to come so soon!"

"You may say so with truth, Sir Felix, so far as I am concerned," replied the duchess. "It cost me a terrible effort to rise at such an unearthly hour. However, I was resolved to submit to any personal inconvenience rather than lose my place."

"We should have been here half an hour sooner had not the streets been so excessively crowded, Sir Felix," observed Lady Kildare.

"Oh! your ladyship has arrived in the very nick of time," rejoined the little alderman, bowing.

"I am glad to hear it," observed Lady Pembroke. "The people at the entrance informed us we were late."

"Is it possible they ventured to say so to persons of your ladyship's distinction? They can't plead ignorance, for they must have *felt*—if not otherwise acquainted with the fact—that they had before them persons of the most exalted rank. I'm afraid your ladyship will think us very ill-bred in the City."

"I can't possibly think so, Sir Felix," Lady Pembroke rejoined, "with such a perfect specimen of politeness before me."

"Your ladyship quite overwhelms me," he replied, laying his hand upon his heart, and casting down his eyes. "If I felt that I really deserved the compliment, I should be the vainest of mortals."

"What a droll little creature it is!" whispered Lady Pembroke, with a laugh, to Lady Kildare. "These citizens are vastly entertaining, though I know most about them from plays, but to-day we shall have an opportunity of studying them from the life. I suppose their manners and customs are vastly different from our own?"

"We shall see," returned Lady Kildare. "Here comes another of the aborigines. Ah! as I live, 'tis Mr Beckford. I vow I didn't know him in his gown."

As she spoke, the alderman in question came up, and bowed to the three peeresses, with all of whom he appeared to be acquainted.

"I give your grace welcome to the City," he said to the duchess. "We are much flattered to have guests so fair and of such high degree within our halls."

"Like your brother alderman, Sir Felix Bland, you indulge in compliments, it seems, Mr Beckford," the duchess rejoined. "'Tis the first time I have been at Guildhall, and I am curious to witness one of your grand civic entertainments."

"I trust your grace will not be disappointed," Mr Beckford replied. "Perhaps, as we have royalty and the court with us to-day, we may have a better chance of pleasing you."

"We have royalty and the court every day," rejoined the duchess, laughing. "Somewhat too much of both, perhaps. What I want to see is a real Lord Mayor and a Lady Mayoress. They tell me your Lord Mayor is a draper? Can it be true?"

"Perfectly true, your grace. And, what is more, he is not ashamed of his calling. We are all traders in the City, you know."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Sir Felix, "that's very well for you to assert, Mr Beckford—you who are an opulent West India merchant, and come of a good family, whose grandsire was Sir Thomas Beckford, sheriff for London in 1677."

"I should have been prouder had I made my own fortune as you have done, Sir Felix, and as our present Lord Mayor has done, than I am from inheriting one," rejoined Beckford. "As to birth, craving your grace's pardon, it is mere matter of accident."

"And pray, Sir Felix, what may be your business?" inquired the duchess.

"Mine!" he exclaimed, visibly embarrassed, and having recourse to his snuff-box—"mine! ha! ha! I thought your grace had known it—he! he!" And he stuffed an immense pinch into his nostrils.

"I'll spare my excellent friend the necessity of explaining that he is a saddler," observed Alderman Beckford; "and I'll add for him, what he couldn't so well add for himself, that he has realized a very large fortune by his business."

"How very extraordinary!" cried Lady Kildare, laughing. "I wasn't aware till now that people could make large fortunes by selling saddles and bridles."

"Your ladyship's coachman could have enlightened you on that point," observed Beckford, dryly.

"By-the-by, I hear you have rebuilt Fonthill, Mr Beckford," observed the duchess, anxious to relieve Sir Felix by changing the conversation. "'Twas a thousand pities the fine old place should be burnt down."

"I have built a finer house in its stead," said Beckford.

"But at an immense cost," interposed Sir Felix, who had now recovered from his embarrassment. "Mr Beckford has greater philosophy than most of us possess. Your grace shall hear what occurred at the time. I happened to be with him when a messenger, who had ridden post-haste from Wiltshire, brought word that Fonthill Abbey was destroyed by fire. I was dreadfully shocked by the intelligence, as your grace will naturally conceive, but what did Mr Beckford say and do? Rave and swear, as I should have done? Nothing of the sort. Quietly taking out his pocket-book, he began to write in it. 'In Heaven's name, what are you doing, my good friend?' I cried, at last, provoked by his silence and apathy. 'Merely calculating the expense of rebuilding the house,' he calmly replied. ''Tis insured for six thousand pounds, and I find it will cost twenty-four thousand more to erect another mansion.' That was all he said about it—he! he!"

"You are a philosopher indeed, Mr Beckford," observed the duchess. "Few persons, under such circumstances, could display so much equanimity. I should not, I'm quite sure."

"I am not always so calm," rejoined Beckford, laughing. "I am choleric enough on occasion, as those who chafe me can testify. Little matters put me out; great matters never. I can bear misfortunes with fortitude, but petty troubles, which others would disregard, annoy me. I cannot bear ingratitude. I hold it to be the basest of crimes, and when I find it manifested either to myself or others, I lose all patience. From this your grace will conceive what my feelings must have been when our Great Commoner, to whom a nation's gratitude is due, found it needful to resign, and still more when his resignation was accepted."

"I can quite understand that you were very angry," replied the duchess, "because I know you to be Mr Pitt's warmest partisan. His defeat, therefore, must have been a severe blow to you."

"'Twas a blow to the whole country," said Beckford; "but it will recoil, and with additional force, on those who inflicted it."

"Mr Pitt, I am told, is coming here to-day," observed Lady Pembroke.

"He is, and your ladyship will see how he will be received by the citizens," returned Beckford. "They, at least, know how much they owe him. They also know what they owe my Lord Bute, and will probably demonstrate their readiness to discharge their obligations to him."

"I am malicious enough to hope they may," laughed Lady Kildare, displaying her pearl-like teeth. "The scene would be highly diverting."

"Your ladyship is not likely to be disappointed of it," said Beckford. "His Majesty may see enough, and hear enough, to spare us the necessity of further remonstrances."

"Lord Bute laughs at your remonstrances, Mr Beckford," said Lady Pembroke, "and counsels his Majesty to pay no heed to them; and his lordship being omnipotent just now, all your representations, however forcible, are likely to fall on dull ears."

"Then we must find other means of obtaining a hearing," rejoined Beckford. "Lord Bute does ill to deride the People. He knows not their strength. They have overthrown many a favourite ere now more potent than himself. Mr Pitt is the People's Minister. Whether their favourite or the royal favourite will prevail in the end, remains to be seen. But that my fellow-citizens, though loyal and dutiful in the highest degree, and ever anxious to maintain the true honour and dignity of the Crown, will not be trifled with, I am certain. A poor jest of Lord Bute made Sir Gresham Lorimer Lord Mayor. Another unlucky jest may work his own overthrow."

"Hold! hold! my good friend, you are going sadly too far," interposed Sir Felix. "You will alarm her grace and their ladyships by the violence of your politics. They will think we all share your sentiments, though many of us, myself included, are of a totally different opinion. I have a great respect for my Lord Bute—a very great respect. He has wonderful abilities—wonderful abilities, both as an actor and a statesman."

"Ay, as his Majesty's father, the late Prince of Wales, said of him, he would make an excellent ambassador in a court where there is nothing to do. He has ability enough for that," laughed Beckford. "You haven't forgiven me, I see, Sir Felix, for making known your calling. Pshaw! man, don't look blank. There's no disgrace in being a saddler."

"No disgrace, certainly, but, at the same time, nothing to be proud of," rejoined the little alderman, rather nettled. "So, if you please, sir, we'll say no more on the subject."

Mr Beckford laughed, and, turning to the Duchess of Richmond, begged permission to present her grace and their ladyships to the Lord Mayor; and assent being instantly given, he led them on to the vestibule, where Sir Gresham was standing in the midst of the City dignitaries and officials, and the presentations were made in due form.

If our Lord Mayor was not distinguished by any remarkable dignity of deportment or peculiar refinement of manner—as was scarcely to be expected—he had a great deal of natural good breeding and courtesy, which answered the purpose quite as well; and being perfectly easy and self-possessed, he was fully equal to the situation, and acquitted himself so well that the fastidious court ladies, who expected to find something ridiculous in his appearance and manner, were surprised and perplexed. They did not suppose a draper could be so well bred. They thought to dazzle and confound him, but they did not succeed. He could not be insensible to their rare personal attractions; he could not fail to be struck by the courtly grace of their manner; but neither their rank, the splendour of their beauty, nor the haughtiness of their deportment, produced any undue effect upon him. Exceedingly affable, he did not lose sight for a moment of the position he had to maintain.

"Upon my word, the Lord Mayor seems very agreeable," observed Lady Kildare, aside, to Lady Pembroke. "Who would have supposed a draper could be a gentleman?"

"One would think he had been born for his present office, it seems to suit him so exactly," rejoined the countess.

"I am quite concerned your grace and your ladyships should have come so early," remarked Sir Gresham to the duchess. "You will find it very tedious, I fear, to wait so many hours."

"Possibly we may, my lord," replied the duchess; "but then it is to be hoped we shall be rewarded for our pains. We must try to support the fatigue. People went to the Abbey overnight to view the Coronation, and they tell me this will be quite as fine a sight."

"Not quite, I fear," returned the Lord Mayor; "it won't have the advantage of your grace and their ladyships as chief performers in it. 'Tis a pity you can't see the procession. It might have amused you and would have helped to pass away the time."

"I should have liked that prodigiously," said the duchess. "But we were not invited to Mr Barclay's, where their Majesties and their Royal highnesses are going to view the procession."

While this conversation was taking place, several other ladies, richly attired, had entered the vestibule, and were now presented to the Lord Mayor by some of the aldermen composing the committee, and were very courteously received by his lordship.

"We are rather in the way here, I think," said the duchess, with a graceful though formal obedience to the Lord Mayor. "May we trouble you to show us to our places, Sir Felix?"

"I am at your grace's entire disposal," he rejoined, with a bow. "This way, your grace—this way!"

He was proceeding with a very consequential air, when he was suddenly stopped by Mr Judkins and a party of Mazarines, all of whom threw very angry glances at him, drawn up before the doorway of the hall.

"By your leave, gentlemen!" he cried. "Way for the Duchess of Richmond, and the Countesses of Kildare and Pembroke. D'ye hear, gentlemen?—make way!"

To his surprise, however, the sturdy Mazarines did not retire.

"What means this extraordinary conduct, gentlemen?" he pursued, growing very red in the face. "Her grace will have a poor opinion of City manners. Permit us to pass."

"Her grace shall know whom she has to blame for any disappointment she may experience," returned Judkins. "It is not our fault, but yours, Sir Felix, that there are no front places left in the galleries."

"No front places left!" exclaimed the little alderman, looking aghast. "'Sdeath! I shall go distracted. How can this have happened, Mr Judkins?"

"Because you have given away too many tickets, Sir Felix," replied Judkins. "Two hundred ladies sent in by you have already got seats, and we won't admit any more, be they whom they may. We stand upon our privileges and immunities. We have our own friends to oblige—our own ladies to accommodate. You have greatly exceeded your allowance, and will be censured for your conduct at the next court. Had each member of the committee acted as you have done, we should now have fourteen hundred ladies in the galleries—that is, supposing they could accommodate so many. It's too bad of you."

"A great deal too bad," chorused the Mazarines. "But we stand upon our rights. No more of your tickets shall pass, Sir Felix."

"I don't for a moment deny your rights, gentlemen," cried Sir Felix, "I appeal to your good nature—to your well-known gallantry. I implore you to allow her grace and their ladyships to pass. I will find places."

"There are none to be had, I tell you, Sir Felix," rejoined Judkins. "We regret to appear disobliging and uncourteous to the ladies, but we have no alternative."

"How can I extricate myself from this horrible dilemma!" cried Sir Felix, with a look of distress so excessively absurd that nobody could help laughing at him.

"Well, we must perforce return, it seems," said the duchess. "We have got our early ride for nothing. We shall know how to trust to your promises in future, Sir Felix."

"Your grace drives me to despair," he rejoined, with a frenzied look. "I can never survive this disgrace. I shall die on the spot."

"Not till you have found chairs for us, I trust, Sir Felix," said Lady Pembroke, laughing. "You are bound to see us safely away. It is rather provoking, I must confess, to come so far and see nothing."

"For my part, I shall never forgive Sir Felix," said Lady

Kildare. "I did not expect such treatment from a person of his reputed politeness."

"We must endeavour to console ourselves by thinking that the spectacle we came to witness is not worth beholding," observed Lady Pembroke. "Adieu, Sir Felix. If you design to put an end to your existence, pray don't delay."

As the duchess and the two countesses turned to depart, the Lord Mayor disengaged himself from the persons by whom he was surrounded, and stepped towards them. His countenance wore a reassuring smile.

"I hope your grace will pardon me for allowing this matter to proceed so far," he said; "I have done so to punish Sir Felix for his indiscretion. You need be under no apprehension about places, for I have ordered three of the best seats to be retained for you, and they are now at your disposition. But if you have any curiosity to witness the procession—and it is likely to be better than ordinary to-day—and will so far honour me, I will pray you to repair to my house in Cheapside, which is nearly opposite to Mr Barclay's, where you will see everything without inconvenience, and can return here when you are so minded."

"Your lordship is excessively obliging," replied the duchess. "I accept your offer with pleasure; and I think I may answer for my friends," she added, to the two countesses, who smilingly assented, and expressed their obligations to the Lord Mayor.

"The Lady Mayoress and my daughters will be enchanted to show you every attention," pursued Sir Gresham. "But before proceeding thither, I trust your grace will allow me to show you our ancient hall, of which we citizens are not a little proud. It must never be said that three of our most richly graced court ladies were refused admittance to it. Allow me to attend you."

"At a sign from his lordship, Mr Judkins and the rest of the common-councilmen, whose demeanour was now totally changed, and who were all smiles and civility, drew back, and ranged themselves in double file.

Passing through these lines, a few steps brought the Lord Mayor and his lovely companions into the body of the hall.

Astonished at the magnificent spectacle that burst upon her, the duchess warmly expressed her admiration, as did the two countesses in equally rapturous terms. We have endeavoured to familiarize the reader with the ordinary aspect of the hall, but it had now undergone a wonderful metamorphosis, being splendidly decorated in anticipation of the grand entertainment to be given within it.

On either side large galleries had been erected, the fronts of which were hung with crimson cloth, and otherwise ornamented. Even at this early hour, as already intimated, these galleries were almost entirely filled by richly-attired ladies, many of them of great personal attraction, whose plumed head-dresses, and the brilliants with which they were ornamented, added greatly to the effect produced by such a galaxy of beauty.

Cut-glass chandeliers for illumination of the place when evening came on were suspended from the roof, and the royal banner, the banners of the City, with those of the twelve principal companies, were hung from the walls. The great cornice was traced throughout its entire extent by a cordon of uncoloured lamps. Orchestras, capable of containing two full military bands, were erected towards the eastern end of the hall.

Here, upon the platform generally used for the hustings, and now covered with Turkey carpet, the royal table was placed, most sumptuously adorned with gold plate, as well as with a variety of emblematic devices appropriate to the occasion. A superb canopy fashioned of crimson satin, embroidered with the royal arms worked in gold, covered the seats intended for their Majesties.

Behind the royal table, stretching across the hall, and on the right and left, were magnificent side-boards, piled with salvers, flagons, ships of silver, and other plate.

On either side of the platform, and just where it crossed the body of the hall, were reared lofty stages for the reception of barons of beef, so that these mighty joints might be carved by Mr Towse and his assistants in sight of the whole company.

Across the lower hustings, a table, richly set, was laid for the Lord Mayor, and the aldermen and their ladies. Three other tables, running down the chamber, all arranged with exquisite taste, were reserved for the Lady Mayoress and her guests. At the first of these her ladyship herself was to preside; at the second, or mid-table, Mrs Chatteris; and at the third, Lady Dawes.

A wide space here intervened, beyond which were three other long tables, running towards the opposite end of the hall, the upper parts of which were destined for the privy councillors, ministers of state, foreign ambassadors, and nobility, while the lower seats were assigned to the Mazarines.

The Court of Common Council were to dine on tables on the south side of the hall, but below the grand entrance, where the division occurred. The table for the City officers was placed on the north side, under the guardianship of Gog and Magog, who came out magnificently, having been newly painted and gilt for the occasion. The judges and serjeants were to dine in the old council-chamber.

VI.

UNDER WHAT SINGULAR CIRCUMSTANCES THE LORD MAYOR MET, AS HE SUPPOSED, HIS LONG-LOST BROTHER LAWRENCE.

The entrance of the Lord Mayor, and the distinguished party with him, had excited, as might naturally be expected, a very lively sensation in the galleries, as was made manifest by a general murmur of applause; but when his lordship and the lovely peeresses passed up the hall and ascended the platform on which the royal table was set, turning round to look at the scene from this advantageous position, the enthusiasm became irrepressible, the whole of the fair beholders arose en masse, clapping their hands, waving their handkerchiefs, and giving audible utterance to their approbation. The ovation was exceedingly gratifying to the Lord Mayor, and he acknowledged it by repeated bows, which tended to prolong the applause.

At this moment the spectacle was really brilliant. Streaming through the gorgeous panes of the great eastern window, the bright sunbeams fell upon the beauteous occupants of the galleries, tinging their plumes and other portions of their attire with various hues, and giving them the appearance of beds of flowers.

Viewed from the elevated position on which stood the Lord Mayor and the ladies, the vast chamber, superbly decorated as it was, hung with banners, provided with galleries filled with many of the loveliest women the metropolis could then boast, furnished with tables laid for some thousands of guests, and all richly laid,—thus viewed, we say, the hall presented a magnificent *coup d'œil.*

Having enjoyed the charming spectacle, and come in for their own share of the applause resounding from the galleries—having glanced at the arrangements on the royal table, and noted the superb plate on the sideboards—the duchess thanked the Lord Mayor, and begged to retire, as they might be trespassing too much on his time.

As they were descending the steps leading from the dais to the lower hustings, Lady Kildare expressed a desire to have a nearer view of the giants. Smiling at the request, Sir Gresham good-naturedly led the way towards them.

While they were contemplating the colossal figures, and listening to Sir Gresham's droll version of the popular legend connected with them, a strange hollow sound, resembling a prolonged and dismal groan, was heard, issuing apparently from the interior of the wall behind the figure of Magog.

The ladies glanced at each other in surprise, and the Lord Mayor paused in his recital. The unearthly sound ceased for a moment, and was then renewed.

Just in front of the party, at the top of the steps leading to the internal courts, stood a fat, pompous-looking beadle, with a face almost as crimson as his gold-laced coat, and holding a tall staff with a gilt head nearly as big as that of the Corporation mace.

"What's that?" cried Sir Gresham, addressing a look of inquiry towards this consequential person. "What's that, I say?" he repeated.

But the beadle pretended he heard nothing. The excuse, however, did not avail him, for presently a knocking was heard against a small low door on the right of the arched entrance, and a voice could be distinguished as of some one imploring to be let out.

"Bless my soul! some poor fellow must be shut up in the Little Ease!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "Who has done it, Staveley? Not you, I hope?" he continued, noticing the beadle's confusion, and that his cheeks were becoming redder than ever.

"Well, I own I locked him up, my lord," stammered Staveley; "but I didn't know what else to do with him. I hope your lordship won't be angry."

"But I am angry—very angry," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "If you have acted without the Chamberlain's warrant—and I'm quite sure no order for confinement in that cell would be given by him on a day like this—you shall smart for it. Who is the person you have dared to imprison? What offence has he committed? Speak out, sirrah—no equivocation."

"I'm very sorry to have incurred your lordship's displeasure," returned the now crestfallen beadle; "but I did it for the best. 'Tis a drunken old scoundrel whom I have shut up, my lord—a fellow not worth your right honourable lordship's consideration. The old rascal was employed to lay out the tables, and serve at the banquet, but he made too free with the wine entrusted to him—drinking your lordship's health, as he affirmed—and got drunk, roarin' drunk, my lord—so I locked him up there that he might have a chance to become sober; and I dare say he's all right now, for he's been there since seven o'clock. That's everything about it, my lord. If your lordship desires it, I'll let him out at once."

"And so you have imprisoned a poor old man in that cell for four or five hours, eh?" cried the Lord Mayor, very angrily. "Enough to kill him. Your unwarrantable conduct will cost you your post, Staveley."

"I hope your lordship will take a more lenient view of the case," said the beadle, penitentially. "No doubt I've done wrong, since your lordship thinks so. But 'twill be hard to lose my post for a drunken old vagabond. Besides, the old sot aggerawated me by the liberties he took with your right honourable lordship's honoured name. What does your lordship suppose he had the effrontery to assert?"

"Nay, I can't guess," cried Sir Gresham, impatiently.

"Imperance couldn't further go. He swore he was your lordship's brother. May I lose my post if he didn't. 'I'll complain of you to my brother, the Lord Mayor,' says he. 'That's very well,' says I, 'but I shall lock you up till you alter your tune, my friend.' And I thought I did quite right."

"Let him out without more ado," rejoined Sir Gresham, upon whom his beadle's attempt to justify himself had produced a certain impression.

Taking a large bunch of keys from his capacious pocket, Staveley unlocked the cell-door, and bawled out, in an authoritative tone, "There! come out, my man, come out!"

Whereupon, an old man, whose rusty black attire was a good deal disordered, and whose grey scratch-wig had got knocked off during his confinement, crept out on all-fours; for though, as presently appeared, the aged prisoner was short of stature and round-shouldered, he could not stand upright in the narrow hole into which he had been thrust.

The old man's appearance was abject and pitiable in the extreme. Besides bearing evident traces of the excess he had committed, his features were stamped with shame and contrition, and he seemed painfully sensible of the degrading position in which he was placed.

"There, get up!" cried the beadle, hastily adjusting his dress, and clapping the wig upon his bald head. "Get up, I say, and make an obeisance to the Lord Mayor."

"The Lord Mayor!" exclaimed the old man, with a sharp cry. "Where is he?—ha!" And he would have rushed away, if the beadle had not forcibly withheld him.

"Don't detain me!" he cried. "I can't face him. I won't."

"But you must and shall," rejoined Staveley. "You don't go hence till his lordship discharges you, I can promise you. You've got me into trouble enough already with your misconduct. Have you no manners?" he added, shaking him roughly. "Make an obeisance, I tell you, to the Lord Mayor. Perhaps you'll claim relationship with his lordship now!" he pursued, in a low decisive tone.

"Oh no, I won't," replied the old man, beseechingly, but without daring to raise his eyes to Sir Gresham. "I didn't mean it! Don't mention it, I implore you! I was mad—I retract all I said."

"I knew you was bouncing," rejoined the beadle, chuckling. "But learn to your confusion, you owdacious old braggart, that his right honourable lordship is aware of all you said in defamation of his character."

"I said nothing derogatory of him, surely?" rejoined the old man.

"You said you were his brother, and if that ain't derogatory and defamatory, I'm a Dutchman and not a British beadle. Down on your marrow-bones and ask pardon."

"Have pity upon me, and let me go!" cried the old man. "You don't know how you torture me."

"You richly deserve it for getting me into trouble," said Staveley, again shaking him. "Hold up your head, I tell you, and look his lordship straight in the face."

"I can't!—I daren't!" cried the old man, covering his face with his hands.

Meantime, the Lord Mayor was greatly agitated. The more he regarded him, the more convinced he became that the old man was his brother Lawrence, and the shock and surprise of the discovery affected him so powerfully for a few moments, that he could neither speak nor stir. But he presently became calmer, and prepared to carry out the course he judged it right to pursue.

Many a one might have hesitated to acknowledge a near relative under such circumstances, and could scarcely be blamed for his reluctance. Sir Gresham, however, was not a person of this stamp. He resolved to adopt the proper and the manly course, let the world think what it might of him.

Praying the ladies to excuse him for quitting them, and waving to the beadle to stand off, he advanced towards the old man, who still kept his face covered, and patted him affectionately on the shoulder.

"Why, Lawrence, is it you?" he said. "Is it you, my poor brother? What a meeting is this, after so many years' separation!"

The old man trembled violently, and it was some time before he could speak. He then replied in broken accents, and without looking up,

"Your lordship is mistaken. I am not he you take me for. I have not the honour to be related to you."

"Come, come, Lawrence!" cried the Lord Mayor, "I am not to be put off thus. You told yonder beadle you were my brother."

"It appears that I made some such silly boast, my lord; but my brain at the time was confused with strong drink, to which I am not much accustomed. Believe me I am heartily ashamed of myself, and humbly crave your lordship's pardon."

"Don't talk about pardon, brother, and don't attempt to deny your relationship. It won't do. You are greatly changed, 'tis true, but I know your voice. Besides, my heart tells me you are my mother's son."

"Your lordship has a good heart, a very good heart," rejoined the old man, "but it deceives you now. I committed a great error in making such an improper and ill-judged statement, but I should do still worse to persist in it. Not for worlds would I expose you to the reproach, the just reproach, of being connected with such a castaway as myself."

"If I don't fear the reproach, you need not, brother," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "You have been unfortunate, while I have been lucky, that's the only difference between us. If your conduct has been blameless—as I trust it has—you are just as good as myself. Everybody knows my origin. Come, give me your hand, brother—give me your hand."

"No, no, I won't abuse your lordship's generosity," replied the old man, respectfully declining the proffered hand. "How many years may it be," he pursued, "since your lordship has seen the brother for whom you take me?"

"Why, forty years and upwards. You know that as well as I do, Lawrence," said the Lord Mayor. "During all that time I have never even heard of you."

"Forty years and upwards!" sighed the old man. "And your lordship has not seen or heard of your brother during all that time! Depend on it he is dead. Best suppose him so, at all events. I'll answer for it he won't trouble you more. My name is Candish—Hugh Candish—and, as will be evident to your lordship, I am not in very flourishing circumstances."

"I see you are not," rejoined the Lord Mayor, brushing away the tear that started to his eyes; "but it shan't be my fault if you don't do better in future."

"I must again say that your lordship is the dupe of a too generous nature, and I beseech you to consider well before you proceed further. I have no possible claim on your bounty. Have I your permission to depart?"

"No, no, you shan't go," cried the Lord Mayor. "Brother, or no brother, you must remain here to-day."

"Your lordship is too good; but disagreeable remarks will be made if I remain after what has occurred. I came here solely to see your lordship on this your day of triumph, and having accomplished my object, I have nothing more to desire."

"But I command you—that is, I beg of you to stay," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "Here, Staveley," he cried to the beadle, who had remained within earshot, and had tried to catch what passed between them, "take Mr Candish to my private room, and tell Jennings to give him the best dress he can find—the best dress, d'ye hear? A good place must be kept for Mr Candish at the table of the common-council—"

"A place at the common-councilmen's table, my lord! Did I hear your lordship aright?" exclaimed the astounded beadle.

"You did, sirrah. And I counsel you to see my orders strictly attended to. Mr Candish is to go where he likes, and do what he pleases; but if he'll follow my advice, he won't take any more wine before dinner."

"Nor after dinner, my lord, except one glass to pledge your lordship's health."

"Good-bye, brother," said Sir Gresham, in a low tone. "I fully comprehend and respect the motives that induce you to practise this concealment, but I can only submit to it to-day. To-morrow you must no longer be Hugh Candish, but Lorry Lorimer, as of old. I shall look out for you on my return from Westminster. Once more, good-bye. What! won't you give me your hand now?"

"I daren't, my lord. I am not worthy to take it."

"Tut! tut! have done with this nonsense!" cried Sir Gresham, seizing the old man's head, and grasping it cordially.

For the first time the latter raised his eyes, and fixed them upon the Lord Mayor with a look of unutterable gratitude and admiration.

"Well, I'm blessed if this don't beat anything I ever saw or heard of," moralized the beadle. "A Lord Mayor shaking hands with a pauper, ordering him a fine suit of clothes, and a place at the common-council table. Things have come to a pretty pass!"

But he was recalled to a sense of duty by the Lord

Mayor, who once more consigned the old man to his care, and turned to rejoin the ladies; thinking, as he went, how he would make the rest of his poor brother's days comfortable.

Candish went away quietly enough with the beadle, who had now entirely altered his deportment towards him; but as they were traversing a passage leading to the old council-chamber, the old man discerned a means of flight through a door opening upon the street at the back of the hall, and immediately availed himself of it and ran off, more quickly than might have been expected.

Staveley called to him to stop, but in vain. When he got to the door, the old man had disappeared.

"Was there ever such an aggerawating old rascal!" exclaimed the beadle. "What shall I say to his lordship? I shall lose my post after all."

VII.

OF THE LORD MAYOR'S PROCESSION TO BLACKFRIARS; AND OF THE PAGEANTS EXHIBITED BY THE CITY COMPANIES.

"I BEG your grace and their ladyships ten thousand pardons," cried Sir Gresham, as he returned to them. "A strange circumstance has just occurred to me—though it wouldn't interest you to hear it. Ah! Sir Felix," he pursued, to the little alderman, who came up opportunely at the moment, "it must be your business to procure chairs for the conveyance of her grace and their ladyships to my house.. Officers must attend to clear the way. This must be done without loss of time, as the procession will start forthwith, and the ladies desire to see it."

"My own chariot should be at her grace's service," said Sir Felix, "but I suppose it is absolutely necessary that I should join the procession."

"Quite necessary," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "You know that very well. Every moment is precious."

"On this Sir Felix hurried off, while the Lord Mayor conducted the ladies to the vestibule. Here it appeared that the Sheriffs, with the Recorder and Chamberlain, and other of the chief City officers of the Corporation, had already been summoned to their carriages.

In a few moments more Sir Felix returned, almost out of breath, stating that the chairs were in readiness, and that the City marshals had undertaken to ride on in advance, so that there should be no possibility of hindrance.

With many expressions of obligation to Sir Gresham the duchess and her companions then took leave, and were ceremoniously conducted by Sir Felix and two other aldermen belonging to the committee to the conveyances provided for them, and were borne with great promptitude down New King's-street to the Lord Mayor's residence in Cheapside.

Intelligence of their arrival being communicated to the Lord Mayor by the upper City marshal on his return to Guildhall-yard, his lordship at once issued his commands that the procession should start, whereupon the aldermen entered their carriages.

At last the Lord Mayor himself was summoned by the ushers, and with the same pompous formalities which had marked his entrance to the hall, his train being borne by a page, and the sword and mace carried before him, he re-entered his state-coach, amid flourishes of trumpets, which made the court resound with their clangour, while his chaplain and the three officials resumed their places beside him.

Meanwhile the sixty poor liverymen of the Merchant Tailors' Company, in scarlet and puce hoods and gowns, had quitted their station in the piazza, and advanced towards the head of the procession, which, when the long train was put in motion, was considerably beyond Bow Church. These liverymen marched three and three.

They were, however, preceded by six peace-officers to clear the way, and followed by a like number of javelin-men. Then came the marshal of the Merchant Tailors' Company bearing the shield of the arms of England, succeeded by four stavesmen of the company, with their badges of office.

Next came the band of the Grenadier Guards in full regimentals, playing lively tunes as they marched along. After them was borne the royal standard, the arms of the Merchant Tailors' Company, the arms of the City of London, the arms of the Lord Mayor, with those of the other distinguished members of the company. Next came the barge-master, a very portly personage, in his state-dress, supported by watermen in scarlet and puce liveries.

Preceded by the beadle in his gown, came the clerk of the company in a chariot, followed by the gentlemen of the livery, the gentlemen of the court of assistants, the wardens in their carriages, and the prime warden, Mr Braybroke, in his chariot, attended by his chaplain. On either side of the governors of this wealthy and important company walked watermen and other attendants in livery.

But it was not so much upon the wardens and prime warden that the gaze of all the spectators was turned as on the pageant following them, which was intended to represent the coat armour of the company, and consisted of a large tent royal, *gules*, fringed and richly garnished, *or*, lined, faced, and doubled, *ermine*. This tent was fixed upon a large and elevated stage, on which sat several richly-habited figures, amongst whom was the renowned Sir John Hawkwood, the valiant Condottiere of Edward the Third's day, originally a tailor, but who, according to old Fuller, turned his needle into a sword and his thimble into a shield, and so distinguished himself at Poitiers and in the Italian wars, that the Merchant Tailors are, with good reason, proud to number him among their ranks. On either side of the tent, on a smaller stage, stood a camel ridden by an Indian, forming the supporters of the company's arms.

This pageant, which was much admired, was followed by the banners and standards, with the various officers of the Ironmongers' Company, concluding with the master in his chariot.

Then came a second pageant, representing the Lemnian forge with Vulcan at work at it, aided by the Cyclops. Fanned by a gigantic pair of bellows, a fire was kept blazing in the furnace, while the anvil rang with blows of the hammer dealt by swart old Mulciber and his brawny and smoke-begrimed companions.

The Ironmongers were followed by the Skinners, and a pageant was exhibited by the latter that caused infinite diversion. It represented a great number of wild animals, lions, tigers, leopards and panthers, sables and beavers; but in the midst of these stuffed specimens was a great living bear, who climbed up a pole, and performed sundry other tricks, to the great amusement of the beholders.

Next came the Haberdashers, whose pageant was placed on a very long stage, and represented a number of shops, where milliners, hosiers, and other dealers in small commodities, served. This pageant gave the greater satisfaction, inasmuch as the actors in it distributed their wares, accompanied by small papers of tobacco, gratis among the crowd.

Next came the Vintners, who exhibited a very grand mythological piece, the Triumph of Bacchus, and this might have been better received if the spectators could have shared the flowing cups perpetually drained by the tipsy revellers.

The Fishmongers displayed a statue of St Peter, richly gilt, with a dolphin, two mermaids, and a couple of sea-horses. The Clothworkers introduced Jack of Newbury, the famous Berkshire clothier, in the dress of the sixteenth century, surrounded by peasants in costumes of the same period, dancing to the music of pipe and tabor. In front of this pageant was the golden ram, the crest of the company.

The Armourers were distinguished by an archer standing erect in a richly gilt car, with a bow in his left hand and a quiver over his shoulder. The Grocers exhibited a camel with a negro on its back, between two baskets full of groceries and dried fruits, which the tawny rider scattered right and left, and for which the bystanders struggled and fought.

All these pageants found great favour with the multitude, but they were quite outdone by the Brewers, who displayed two enormous wicker-work figures, each fifteen feet high, having great paunches, grotesque visages, and extraordinary costumes, intended to represent the giants Colbrand and Brandamore. Seated in open chariots, these sociable Titans smoked their pipes, quaffed ale out of mighty pots, and bandied jests with the bystanders.

The procession would have appeared somewhat tame after the pageants which constituted the most popular part of the show, had not the spectators been enlivened by the music of a second grand military band.

Then came the Lord Mayor's beadles in their state liveries, the barge-master in his state dress, bargemen with the sheriffs' banners, watermen with various colours, the two under-sheriffs, the City Solicitor, the Remembrancer, the

Comptroller, the two Secondaries, the four Common Pleaders, the Common Serjeant, the Town-Clerk, and the Chamberlain. On either side of them were mounted peace-officers, and they were followed by the mounted band of the Life Guards.

Next came the ancient Herald of England in his tabard and plumes. Then three trumpeters riding abreast, in rich dresses, with their clarions decorated with flags. After them rode a guard, followed by a standard-bearer on horseback in half-armour, bearing the banner of his knight.

To him succeeded two esquires, riding together and bearing shields; and after them, between two yeomen of the guard, rode an ancient knight, mounted on a richly-caparisoned steed, armed cap-à-pie in a suit of polished steel, and carrying a battle-axe. Behind the knight came two armourers with a mounted guard.

Next came Mr Sheriff Nash in his state chariot, drawn by four horses, followed by three trumpeters and a mounted guard. Then came other standard-bearers and esquires, followed by a second knight, equipped like the first, and similarly attended.

Next came Mr Sheriff Cartwright in his state chariot, followed by the aldermen who had not passed the chair, amongst whom were our friends Mr Beckford and Sir Felix Bland. Then came the Recorder, and after him the aldermen who had served the office of Mayor. After them the late Lord Mayor, Sir Matthew Blakiston, in his chariot. Then more trumpeters, another standard-bearer, esquires, yeomen of the guard, and a third knight, sheathed, like those who had gone before him, in complete steel.

More armourers succeeded, more trumpeters on horseback, more mounted guard, another standard-bearer, two more esquires, and then a fourth knight in a suit of brass scale armour.

After him rode three trumpeters, and then came the Lord Mayor's servants in their state liveries; tall fellows, each above six feet in height, picking the way through the mud in their thin shoes, and getting their salmon-coloured silk hose bespattered by it.

To these gorgeous lacqueys, who did not seem to relish the part assigned them in the procession, succeeded another military band; after which, on his proudly caparisoned steed, came the upper City Marshal, accoutred as previously described, and carrying his long bâton with the air of a field-marshal.

Preceded by the gentlemen of his household, and followed by a guard of honour, our Lord Mayor came next in his state-coach.

As his carriage turned into Cheapside, Sir Gresham directed his gaze towards his own house, and remarked with great satisfaction, and we are bound to admit with some little pride, that among the large assemblage on the balcony were the duchess and the two lovely countesses.

As may be supposed, the Lady Mayoress and her two elder daughters were sedulous in their attentions to their distinguished visitors. Millicent, as usual, was in the background, and her new-found cousin, Prue, was standing beside her. Tradescant and his fashionable companions were likewise there, and several of the latter were grouped behind the court beauties, striving to amuse them with their jests. But though he searched for him, Sir Gresham could nowhere discover his nephew, Herbert.

Graced as it now was, the balcony presented a very brilliant appearance, and Sir Gresham could not repress a feeling of elation as he ran his eye over it, and acknowledged the salutations of the duchess and her companions. Had he discerned the tears that started to Millicent's eyes he would have been more deeply moved.

But indeed the sight of the old house under its present aspect excited many mixed emotions in his breast. He thought of days long, long gone by, when he had first known it, and had little dreamed of the honours and dignities in store for him. He saw himself as the poor 'prentice behind the counter, and heard his kind old master commend his zeal and industry, and tell him if he went on thus he would be sure to prosper, and might in time become Lord Mayor of London.

Well, the worthy man's prediction was now fulfilled. He *had* prospered, and was become Lord Mayor. Yet there was something saddening, even at that moment of exaltation. He had been happier as the poor 'prentice, with his way to make in the world, than now that the utmost object of his ambition was attained, and he was seated in his gilt coach, with the acclamations of his fellow-citizens ringing in his ears.

So absorbed was he by these reflections that the shouts of the bystanders fell unheeded on his ears, and Dr Dipple, noticing his abstraction, deemed it prudent to arouse him by calling his attention to a large and crowded scaffold, erected on the west side of Bow Church by the Goldsmiths' Company. The bells of the church were pealing merrily.

"I have not heard those bells ring so blithely since my wedding-day," observed Sir Gresham, "and that's five-and-thirty years ago."

"That was a happy occasion, my lord," rejoined Dr Dipple; "but this is a happier and a prouder."

"A prouder occasion, certainly, Doctor," returned the Lord Mayor; "but I'm not so sure that it is happier than the former. Then, having obtained the object on which I had set my heart, I deemed myself the most fortunate of men, and was, or fancied myself, perfectly happy. Now my ambition is fully gratified, and yet there are drawbacks to my complete felicity. How do you account for this, Doctor?"

"I can't account for it at all," returned the chaplain, "unless your lordship has some secret cause for anxiety of which I am totally ignorant."

"I have nothing whatever to trouble me, my good sir."

"Then I own I am fairly puzzled. But we won't pursue the subject. Do those decorations meet with your lordship's approval?" he added, glancing at a house on the opposite side of the street, the balcony of which was hung with crimson damask, and otherwise sumptuously adorned, having been fitted up in this manner for their Majesties by the committee of aldermen, who had engaged the premises for the occasion."

"The balcony has a handsome effect, and I trust it will please their Majesties," replied the Lord Mayor. "Ah! there is Mr Barclay himself," he added, bowing to a gentleman who stepped out at the moment on the balcony.

Not only was Mr Barclay's house richly decorated in anticipation of his royal visitors, but almost every other habitation on either side of the way was similarly ornamented. Carpets and rich stuffs of various colours were hung from the windows, producing a very gay effect. Moreover, in several places galleries were erected, rising tier above tier to the very roofs of the houses, every seat within them being occupied.

Each of the twelve great City companies had a stand reserved for its rulers and liverymen, and distinguished by its banners. The Goldsmiths, as already mentioned, had a scaffolding near Bow Church. The Grocers had planted themselves at the corner of Friday-street, and the Skinners near Wood-street; while the Salters and the Mercers had fixed their stands on either side of Newgate-street where it opens into Cheapside.

The procession took its way through St Paul's Churchyard, at the eastern end of which the scholars of Christ's Hospital had a stand, while at the top of Ludgate-hill the Ironmongers and Clothworkers had scaffolds. Between them, amid tremendous cheers, passed the procession, and so by the east side of the Fleet—not as yet covered in—to Blackfriars.

The enthusiastic greetings that welcomed our Lord Mayor throughout the whole route made it impossible to doubt the regard entertained for him by his fellow-citizens of every degree. Not only was he cheered by the gaily-dressed folk stationed at the open windows, or on the numerous scaffoldings, and who waved hats and handkerchiefs and shouted lustily as he passed by, but he was equally well received by the common folk, who by their demonstrations of good will evinced their satisfaction. They could only be kept back by the train-bands who lined the way from approaching the state-coach, and trying to shake hands with him.

Luckily there was no tumult—nor did anything occur to disturb the good humour of the mob. They were pleased with the pageants, which they were told had been revived for their special delectation; they were pleased with the procession generally; but most of all they were pleased with the Lord Mayor. The acclamations raised for him in Cheapside were carried on to St Paul's, and thence without interruption to Blackfriars. What with the crowds, the continuous shouting, the ringing of bells, the firing of guns, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, the scene was wonderfully exciting.

VIII.

HOW THE LORD MAYOR WENT TO WESTMINSTER BY WATER, AND WHAT OCCURRED DURING THE PASSAGE.

Fortunately for the display on the river, it was high tide at the time; and fortunately also, there was no wind, so that the surface of the stream, being perfectly unruffled, and somewhat clearer than it is in these days, mirrored back the numerous gilded barks by which it was covered.

The City barge, with its double banks of rowers in rich liveries, in carved and burnished wood-work, the rich hangings of its stately cabin, the broad silken banner in front displaying the City arms, and the numerous pennants bedecking its roof, flamed like the Venetian Bucentaur.

Nor were the barges belonging to the City companies inferior in size and splendour to that destined for the reception of the Lord Mayor and the great civic dignitaries. Newly gilt and decorated for the occasion, decked with pennons and displaying their banners, they were all provided with bands, and manned by watermen in their liveries.

At the helm of each of these magnificent barks, which glittered in the sunbeams as if made of gold, stood the barge-master in his state livery.

To several of them a fantastical appearance was given by the actors in the pageants exhibited in the land procession being taken on board, and so placed that they could be seen by the occupants of the numerous wherries by which the river was crowded. Thus, the two giants, Colbrand and Brandamore, having quitted their chariots, were now comfortably seated on the roof of the gilded saloon of the Brewers' barge, smoking their pipes, and occasionally drinking to the health of the good folks in the wherries.

Sir John Hawkwood, leaning on his two-handed sword, stood at the prow of the Merchant Tailors' barge; St Peter took the Fishmongers under his care; Vulcan and the Cyclops went on board the Ironmongers' galley; and Bacchus and his crew revelled with the Vintners.

The Skinners were rowed by watermen disguised in strange spotted skins and painted hides, while their great brown bear, chained upon the cabin roof, continued to clamber up his pole.

These superb vessels, which, including those belonging to the lesser companies, amounted to more than twenty, were now drawn up in a wide half-moon round Blackfriars-stairs, close to which the Lord Mayor's barge was moored, and made a most brilliant display.

Within this semicircle no wherries or other craft were now allowed to enter, but outside of it thousands of boats hovered, filled with well-dressed persons, eager to view the aquatic procession. In fact, the whole reach of the river, from Queenhithe, past Paul's Wharf and Baynard's Castle, to the Temple-stairs, was thronged with well-laden barks of every kind. The lighters moored to the banks were covered with spectators, as were the wharves on either side, together with every building or projection that seemed to offer a tolerable point of view.

Just before the period of our story, the building of Blackfriars Bridge had been commenced, though as yet little progress had been made. However, an unfinished arch afforded a commanding view of the scene, and was consequently crowded, though the position seemed very perilous.

Bridewell Dock, as this part of the Fleet Ditch was termed, had not then been filled up, and all the vessels within it, with the quays and buildings on either side—shortly afterwards demolished—were thronged.

Before the state-coach drove up to Blackfriars-stairs, under the skilful guidance of Mr Keck, the watermen who had marched in the procession with the Recorder and Chamberlain, the Sheriffs, the Aldermen, and the chief City officers, had entered the barge, so that the Lord Mayor experienced no delay, but, on alighting, was ceremoniously conducted across a railed gangway to the stately vessel prepared for him.

Just as he stepped within it a salute was fired from Baynard's Castle, and another from the opposite bank of the river, while loud and reiterated cheers burst from the spectators on all sides, caught up and re-echoed by those on the river, who could not even see what was going on. At the same moment the bands of the different barges struck up, while the watermen looked out for the signal to start.

As soon as the Lord Mayor and his retinue were on board, the gorgeous vessel was pushed off; the barge-master telegraphed to the convoy around him, and in another moment the whole company was in motion and dropping into their places.

The Merchant Tailors took the lead, moving slowly and majestically along. The Skinners and Brewers followed, while in the midst of the dazzling squadron rode the City barge.

The whole river was now astir. Hundreds of boats accompanied the procession, which they could easily do, the progress of the barges being remarkably easy and dignified, while the lighter and more active craft threaded their way amongst them, or loitered to admire their decorations.

The spectacle was really magnificent. Moving six abreast, the barges stretched almost across the stream, and what with their splendour, the flags and banners with which they were adorned, the music, and the continuous shouts and acclamations from the occupants of the lesser craft, and the beholders on the banks of the river, the procession resembled some grand triumph.

In this manner the fleet passed the Temple Gardens, where the unemployed lawyers were collected to look at the show, old Somerset House—the present imposing edifice was not erected until some years later—Salisbury, York, and Hungerford-stairs—each adding to the number of their attendant barks—and at length came in sight of Westminster Bridge, which had been erected about ten or twelve years, and was pronounced one of the finest bridges in the world.

While the Lord Mayor's barge was passing Whitehall, his lordship, who was frequently obliged to show himself to his admirers and acknowledge their vociferous greetings, noticed amid the wherries thronging around him a small boat rowed by a single waterman, in which sat his nephew, Herbert. He could not be mistaken, for the young man, on perceiving his uncle, stood up and waved his hat.

Though rather surprised at seeing him there, the Lord Mayor smiled and nodded in return, but his countenance almost instantly underwent a change. A little in advance of his nephew was another boat, pulled by two oarsmen, containing a stout elderly personage with his wife—a comely, middle-aged woman—and their daughter. This fat old fellow's name was Walworth. He was a respectable hosier, dwelling in St Mary-axe, well enough to do in the world, and he and his wife were known to Sir Gresham. Alice Walworth, their daughter, was about nineteen, and possessed considerable personal attractions.

Mr Walworth had got up to salute the Lord Mayor, and was in the act of bowing to him, when a collision took place between his boat and another which came suddenly and swiftly round the head of the barge. Losing his balance, owing to the force of the shock, the old hosier was precipitated into the stream with a tremendous splash. But this was only the commencement of the disaster. Mrs Walworth and Alice shrieked aloud, and, in their endeavours to rescue him, overbalanced the boat, and in another instant they and its other occupants were in the water.

The Lord Mayor was greatly alarmed by the accident, and, with some of the aldermen, hastily quitted the saloon to procure assistance.

Aid was promptly found. Herbert Lorimer succeeded in catching Mrs Walworth before she sank, and consigning her to the care of the waterman who pulled his boat, and who held her till further help could be obtained, he instantly plunged into the stream in search of the younger lady, who by this time had been swept away by the current, and, though many an arm had been put out to arrest her, had disappeared.

Herbert, however, did not despair of saving her. He was an excellent swimmer, and noting the place where she had sunk, he dived, and presently returned to the surface sustaining her with one arm, while with the other he kept her from again sinking until a boat came to their aid.

Meantime, the other persons whose lives had also been placed in jeopardy met with a happy deliverance. The two watermen escaped with a ducking, as indeed did old Walworth himself, who was hooked up by the barge-master, and taken on board the City barge, where Mrs Walworth was shortly afterwards brought by the Lord Mayor's directions.

Their anxiety respecting their daughter was speedily relieved by the shouts that hailed the successful issue of Herbert's gallant attempt, and in another minute Alice was delivered to them by her preserver.

IX.

THE LANDING AT WESTMINSTER.

EVERY possible attention that circumstances would permit was paid by the Lord Mayor and those with him to Mrs Walworth and her daughter. Notwithstanding their uncomfortable plight, drenched to the skin, and with all their finery spoiled, both ladies bore up against the annoyances with great cheerfulness.

Poor Mr Walworth looked a very miserable object. Dripping like a water-spaniel, having lost his laced hat and bob-wig in the water, he was next compelled to take off his wet muslin cravat. A glass of ratafia helped to restore him, and he pressed the same remedy upon his wife, who, however, could not be prevailed upon to follow his example.

Great was the surprise of Mrs Walworth and her daughter to learn that the young man, to whose heroic conduct they were so much indebted, was the Lord Mayor's nephew, and, indeed, this circumstance was equally surprising to most of the company within the barge, as they learnt for the first time that his lordship had a nephew—only Sir Felix Bland, Mr Beckford, and a few others, who had seen Herbert in Cheapside, being aware of the fact. The knowledge of the young man's relationship to Sir Gresham certainly did not tend to diminish the interest with which Alice regarded him, while it seemed to increase her father's gratitude in a tenfold degree.

"Don't say a word more, my good Mr Walworth," cried Sir Gresham, cutting short the old hosier's professions; "if you and the ladies don't suffer from the accident, its consequences may prove agreeable rather than the reverse. As the best preventive I would recommend a glass of ratafia to Mrs Walworth"—her husband had already tossed off a second—"'tis an excellent fortifier, my dear madam—all the ladies take it. Won't you pledge my nephew and myself, Miss Walworth?" Alice smiled good-naturedly, bowed in return to their salutations, and raised the glass to her lips, but set it down untasted. "Ah! I see!" exclaimed

Sir Gresham, shaking his head. "Well, if you take cold it will be your own fault. Herbert, your good health! My nephew is nearly as great a stranger to me, Mr Walworth, as he is to you. I never saw him before this morning, but I don't mean to lose sight of him again in a hurry, I can promise you. His conduct on this occasion won't lower him in my regard."

"Your nephew is a very fine young man, my lord," cried Mr Walworth, upon whom the cordial, combined with his previous ducking, had produced some little effect—"a very courageous young man, and I'm sure he will do your lordship infinite credit. I shall always consider myself under the greatest possible obligations to him, and to your lordship. And so will you, my dear—won't you?" he added to Mrs Walworth. "Take a glass of ratafia—do!"

But the lady declined, and looked at him to intimate that he had taken quite enough himself.

"I'll tell you what you must do, Mr Walworth," said the Lord Mayor, "to compensate for the annoyance you have experienced, and enable you to wind up the day pleasantly, you and your wife and daughter must come and dine with the Lady Mayoress and myself at Guildhall. What say you—eh?"

"Oh! my lord, you do us too much honour!" exclaimed the old hosier, delighted.

"You shall see their Majesties and the young Princes, and dance at the ball, Miss Walworth," pursued good-natured Sir Gresham. "I'll find you plenty of partners. My nephew looks as if he could dance—"

"Oh yes, uncle," interposed Herbert, "I can dance a minuet as well as most people."

"Then you shall dance one with Miss Walworth—that is, supposing she will accept you as a partner."

"I need scarcely say it will give me great pleasure to dance with your nephew, my lord," replied Alice, blushing

"Then all's settled. Tickets shall be sent you, Mr Walworth, and if I may advise, you'll get home as quickly as possible and put on dry clothes."

"Precisely what I desire to do, my lord," replied the other. "If I don't change soon I know what will happen. I shall have an attack of rheumatism, that will lay me up for a month. My coat is beginning to stick to my back, and my legs feel as stiff as if cased in leather."

"But you mustn't think of taking a coach," said the Lord Mayor. "If you do, you won't reach the City for hours. A boat to Three Crane Stairs will be the speediest and surest conveyance. Go with Mr Walworth, Herbert," he added to his nephew. "You stand as much in need of dry apparel as he does. And harkee," he whispered, you'll find what you want at my house. Go there at once. Tradescant's wardrobe will furnish you with all you need. He's about the same size as yourself, and his clothes are sure to fit you. Don't hesitate to put on one of the young coxcomb's smartest suits, for I wish you to cut a figure to-night. You're to dine at Guildhall—mind that. Tomline will give you a ticket, and tell you all about it. D'ye heed?"

Herbert thanked his uncle, and a wherry coming alongside, the party got into it, and as soon as the oarsmen could disengage their skiff from the crowd of boats that beset it, they were pulled swiftly down the river.

Meantime, the City barge, which had been delayed during this interval, proceeded on its course, and passed safely through the centre arch of Westminster Bridge, amid the acclamations of the multitudes looking down from its balustrades.

Several of the other barges had gone on while the Lord Mayor halted, and these had grouped themselves on the farther side of the bridge, opposite New Palace-yard Stairs, where his lordship proposed to disembark. All their bands were playing, and the spectacle was now as striking as any previous part of the water-pageant.

While the City barge moved majestically towards the stairs, a salute was fired from one of the wharves on the Lambeth side of the river, and, amidst deafening and long-continued cheers from an immense number of spectators stationed at every point commanding a view, the Lord Mayor landed, and was ceremoniously conducted to Westminster Hall, where he was presented to the Judges of the Court of Exchequer by the Recorder.

The Chief Baron having addressed his lordship in a lengthened speech highly eulogistic of the City, the customary oath was administered. Invitations to the banquet at

Guildhall were then formally given to the Judges, and accepted; after which the Lord Mayor withdrew, and returned to the barge.

His lordship was then conveyed to the Temple, where he once more disembarked, and was received in great state by the Master and Benchers of the Inner Temple, with whom he breakfasted in their Hall.

X.

HOW KING GEORGE THE THIRD AND QUEEN CHARLOTTE SET FORTH FROM SAINT JAMES'S TO DINE WITH THE LORD MAYOR AT GUILDHALL.

About noon on the same day, another cavalcade, moving in the opposite direction of the first, set forth from Saint James's Palace.

King George III. and his consort having, as we are aware, graciously accepted the Lord Mayor's invitation to the banquet at Guildhall, their Majesties started betimes in order to view the civic procession on its return from Westminster from Mr Barclay's house in Cheapside, which, as already stated, was prepared for their reception.

At the time of our narrative, George III., whose accession to the throne had occurred on the death of his grandsire, some thirteen months previously, was a very handsome young man of about three-and-twenty.

Our notions of the personal appearance of this excellent monarch are so connected with portraits taken at a later period of his life, wherein he is represented as an elderly gentleman, rather stout and slightly bent, with a very benevolent expression of countenance, clad in blue coat and boots with brown tops, and leaning on a cane, that we can scarcely fancy him as tall, upright, well-proportioned, and extremely good-looking.

Yet he was so at the period of this story. Very temperate, and taking a vast deal of exercise, he now looked the picture of health. His complexion was fresh and blooming, his eye bright, and his manner, while characterized by great dignity, was very affable and engaging, and offered a pleasing contrast to the cold and haughty deportment of his immediate predecessor, George II.

In spite of his German descent, no monarch ever possessed a more thoroughly English character, or features more truly English, than George the Third. "Born and educated in this country," he said, in his first speech from the throne, "I glory in the name of Briton:"—words that established him in the heart of the whole nation.

Evidence, confirmatory of his extreme amiability and kindness of manner at this period, is afforded by Horace Walpole, who, writing to Sir Horace Mann, says: "The young King, you may trust me, who am not apt to be enamoured with royalty, gives all the indications imaginable of being amiable. His person is tall, and full of dignity; his countenance florid and good-natured; his manner graceful and obliging; he expresses no warmth or resentment against anybody: at most coldness." Again, in a letter to George Montagu, the same shrewd observer writes: "The King seems all good-nature, and wishing to satisfy everybody; all his speeches are obliging. I saw him again yesterday, and was surprised to find the levee-room had lost entirely the air of the lion's den. This sovereign don't stand in one spot with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news; he walks about and speaks to everybody. I saw him afterwards on the throne, where he is graceful and genteel, sits with dignity, and reads his answers to the addresses well."

Such is the picture of this charming Prince, painted at the time by one who, as he described himself, "was not apt to be the Humorous Lieutenant, and fall in love with majesty."

The fair promise held out by the young King was amply fulfilled during his long and eventful reign, chequered as it was by many vicissitudes, and including the sad affliction by which he was visited. Solicitude for the welfare of his subjects, unaffected piety, and a character scrupulously moral, combined with worth and goodness, endeared him to all, and earned for him the title of the "Father of his People."

That there were shades to his otherwise perfect character cannot be denied, but these were lost amid its general brightness. He has been charged with obstinacy, and said to entertain strong and lasting prejudices. It may be so, but at the same time he never yielded to passion or enmity, but sought to be strictly just. By nature he was kindly, benevolent, charitable. His household was well regulated. Practising rigid economy himself, he tried to enforce it throughout his household; yet though careful, he was by no means devoid of generosity. His industry was remarkable, his time being never unemployed. Though his mental qualifications were not of a high order, and though his education had been much neglected, he had great good sense, and remarkable correctness of judgment. Strong moral perceptions guarded him alike from temptation, and prevented him from committing wrong. That the days of a monarch so just, so pious, so revered—to whom his people's happiness was so dear, and for whose preservation so many heartfelt prayers were uttered—should have been temporarily subjected to the direst affliction that can befall man, must ever remain among the inscrutable decrees of an unerring Providence.

However, it is not with this dark and dread period of his lengthened reign that we have to do, but with its dawning splendour, when fire was in his eye, courage in his breast, and vigour in his limbs—when his mind was sound and his judgment good. We have to do with him in the hey-day of youth and happiness, ere yet care and the weight of empire had begun to press upon him—while all was full of present delight and of hopefulness for the future.

So admirably did the young King conduct himself in the exalted position he was called upon to fill, so gentle and beneficent was his sway, so amiable was his manner, that all hearts would have been won, had it not been felt and indeed known that he had a Favourite, by whom he was ruled, and who, it soon became evident, would be content with nothing less than supreme power in the government. Many of his most loyal subjects viewed this influence with distrust and apprehension, as likely, if not shaken off, to lead to evil consequences. The cabal formed against Pitt by Bute's machinations, and the resignation of a minister justly regarded by the country as its saviour, filled every breast with indignation, and would have materially diminished the young monarch's popularity had not the intrigue been traced to its right source. Perhaps the King might have come in for a greater share of popular opprobrium, had not the untoward event followed close upon his nuptials and coronation.

That the Favourite was fully aware of the opinion entertained of him in the City, appears from a letter addressed by him at the time to his confidant, Lord Melcomb: "Indeed, my good lord," he writes, "my situation, at all times perilous, is become much more so, for I am no stranger to the language held in this great city: 'Our darling's resignation is owing to Lord Bute, who might have prevented it with the King, and he must answer for all the consequences.'" Such was the Favourite's impression, and we shall see presently that it was warranted.

No event that had occurred since the young King mounted the throne gave more general satisfaction than his marriage with Charlotte, second sister of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. The royal nuptials were celebrated on the 8th of September, 1761—just two months before the date of our story—and on the 22nd of the same month the coronation of the august pair took place in Westminster Abbey.

Most fortunate was the King in his choice. His first love had been the beautiful and captivating Lady Sarah Lennox, but compelled to conquer his passion for this fascinating person, he turned his thoughts in another direction. By whatever motives he was guided in the selection of a consort, the result showed that he had acted wisely. If he himself made the best of husbands, Queen Charlotte was a model wife and mother.

In describing her Majesty we have again to contend with preconceived notions, which, referring to a later period of her life, would seem to determine that she must always have been plain, if not downright ugly. Such, however, was not the fact. When united to the King she was very young, being scarcely seventeen, and at that time, and indeed for many years afterwards, she was attractive in manner, and certainly pleasing, if not positively pretty.

An eye-witness has given an exact portrait of her: "She is not tall, nor a beauty," writes Horace Walpole; "pale and very thin; but looks sensible and is genteel. Her hair is darkish and fine; her forehead low, her nose very well, except the nostrils spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault, but her teeth are good." In this portrait, however, a most important feature is omitted, namely, the eyes, which were fine and extremely expressive, and which lighted up the countenance, and gave a great charm to it in conversation. Gay and good-humoured, she was without a trace of levity or frivolity of manner. She possessed many accomplishments, played and sang well, was fond of reading, and ever anxious to obtain information. Her conversation was animated, and perhaps she possessed more vivacity than she cared to display. At all events her spirits were under perfect control, and her manner guarded. Her chief aim was to please her royal husband, to whom she invariably showed profound respect.

About noon, as we have said, and while the Lord Mayor was landing at Westminster, drums, trumpets, kettle-drums, and other instruments resounded within the courts of Saint James's Palace, and amid this martial din a troop of Horse Guards, completely equipped, and extremely well mounted, issued from the gates, and took their way slowly past Marlborough House along Pall-Mall.

They were followed by a superb coach, drawn by six noble horses, containing the Duke of Cumberland. Attired in a magnificent military costume, and wearing the blue riband and a star, the hero of Culloden looked painfully ill, and as if his days were numbered. At this juncture he was slowly recovering from a severe paralytic attack, which for a time had deprived him of the use of his limbs, and he had other bodily ailments besides. With difficulty, and only by the aid of two servants, had he been got into his coach. Naturally harsh and repulsive, his features were now swollen and distorted, the mouth being drawn down on the left side, while his bloodshot eyes and truculent looks seemed to justify the epithet of "the Butcher," bestowed upon him for the severity with which he had treated the unfortunate Scots during the rebellion. The Duke was not popular with the multitude, and very few cheers greeted him as he entered Pall-Mall. Evidently offended at the sullen silence of the throng, and with the looks almost of aversion cast at him by some of them, he scowled fiercely around, and threw himself back in his carriage.

After another troop of Horse Guards came the Princess

Amelia in her chariot. Sumptuously attired in silver brocade, ornamented with large flowers, and having her head dressed à la Hollandaise, with well-powdered curls at the sides, and large ringlets behind, frilled with ribbons set on with diamonds, her Royal Highness presented a very splendid appearance, and quickly effaced the disagreeable impression produced by her morose-looking brother.

Next followed a newly-fashioned state-coach, differing from the one preceding it, inasmuch as it had a superbly-gilt ducal coronet in the centre of the roof, instead of a coronet at each corner.

And here we may be permitted to observe that, although our modern equipages are in some respects an improvement upon those of the last century, they are far less elegant in form, and much less easy to ride in. The way in which the old chariots were hung enabled their occupants to recline backwards most luxuriously, while the coachman's box was placed so far off, that a footman could sit between it and the body of the carriage, with his back to the horses—this servant, of course, being merely supplementary to three or four others hanging behind. Moreover, the coaches and chariots belonging to the nobility and persons of wealth and distinction were magnificently painted and gilt, and presented a gorgeous appearance.

In such a splendid and luxurious vehicle as described, sat, or rather lolled, the Duke of York, a very handsome but indolent-looking young man, whose demeanour and aspect proclaimed him very different in character from his sedate elder brother. Nor did his looks belie him; the young Duke was greatly addicted to pleasurable pursuits. Attired in white velvet, with a gold brocade waistcoat ornamented with flowers, and his ruffles and shirt-frill of richest point d'Espagne, and wearing a flaxen peruke, he had the appearance of a splendid roué. Like his uncle of Cumberland he wore a blue ribband and a star.

After the young Duke came a roomy state-coach, carrying his three brothers, the Princes William, Henry, and Frederick. The royal youths were dressed in rich suits of various colours, flowered or sprigged of gold, and all three looked very lively, and as if anticipating considerable amusement from their visit to the City.

After them came twelve footmen in court liveries, wearing black velvet caps, and then another troop of horse, followed by a coach containing the Princess-Dowager of Wales and her daughters, the Princesses Augusta and Caroline.

The Princess-Dowager was still exceedingly handsome —so handsome, indeed, that she could not escape the breath of scandal. Eyes fine and expressive, skin smooth as satin, complexion brilliant—such were her points of beauty; while time had dealt very leniently with her, as if unwilling to destroy so much loveliness. Perhaps art might have some little share in the conservation of her charms. But as to this we forbear to inquire, being content to chronicle the result. This Princess was dressed in rich silk, trimmed with gold, and embroidered with green, scarlet, and purple flowers. Her diamonds were very brilliant; she had them on her stomacher, her necklace, and earrings; her sleeves were fastened with them, and the sprigs in her hair were formed of the same precious stones.

Her daughters were charmingly attired in pink and white silks, with gold and silver nets, laced tippets, and treble-laced ruffles. Their heads were dressed à l'Anglaise, curled down the sides, powdered and fastened with pink and silver knots—a mode that accorded very well with their bright young faces.

The Princess-Dowager's carriage was followed by a grand retinue, after which came a chariot containing the Earl of Harcourt, Master of the Horse, and then another in which sat the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Chamberlain, and the Marquis of Rockingham, Chief Lord of the Bedchamber. Next marched the Grenadier Guards, and these were succeeded by Yeomen of the Guard.

Then followed his Majesty's state-carriage, drawn by six magnificently-caparisoned cream-coloured horses. In it sat the royal pair, chatting together very pleasantly, and both looking extremely cheerful and happy.

The King, who was by no means so richly dressed as his brother the Duke of York, or even as the younger Princes, wore a blue embroidered velvet coat, on the breast of which glittered a large star set with diamonds; his waistcoat was of white brocade, ornamented with silver flowers. A plain tie-wig, muslin cravat, lace ruffles, and jabot, completed his costume. Such as it was, his attire suited him remarkably well.

The Queen was equally unostentatiously arrayed in plain yellow silk, laced with pearls. Her hair, which she wore without powder, was taken back from the brow, curled at the sides and back, and secured by a half-circlet of pearls and diamonds. Her principal ornaments were superb pear-shaped pearl earrings.

At the corner of Saint James's-street a balcony was erected, which was filled with well-dressed personages of both sexes—beaux, young and old, in flowered velvet, or cloths trimmed with gold, not of the dusky and monotonous hues now in vogue, but of every variety of tint, rich brocaded waistcoats, perukes of every possible shape, high foretops, pigeons' wings, bobs, bags, majors, full-bottoms, queues, and Ramilies.

These gentlemen were too well bred to remain covered in the presence of ladies, but carried their three-cornered laced hats under their arms, and trifled with their snuff-boxes and clouded canes, though some of the more elderly among them protected their hands from the cold by muffs.

Here also the female fashions of the day were fully exhibited—sacques of silk and satin of all the colours in the rainbow, tabby sacques, white and silver sacques, pink-and-white-striped tobine sacques, and brocaded lustring sacques, with a ruby-coloured ground; fly caps, Mecklenburg caps, Ranelagh mobs, turban rolls, and "heads" of the astounding size already described.

By this courtly assemblage, as might naturally be expected, their Majesties were very well received, though no loud demonstrations were made, but as the royal carriage rolled slowly along the cheering commenced, and was vociferously continued as far as Cockspur-street. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved from window and balcony, and the strongest manifestations of loyalty and devotion exhibited.

Some obstruction occurred at Charing-cross, which brought the cavalcade to a halt, and a stoppage of full twenty minutes ensued. The King bore the delay with great good-humour, laughed and chatted with the Queen, called her attention to any trifling matter likely to divert her, and repeatedly and graciously acknowledged the cheers of the bystanders.

At the time of our story great freedom of speech, as well as of action, was indulged in by the masses, who were exceedingly fond of a jest and a practical joke, and were seldom restrained by any sense of decorum from giving way to their predilections.

Hence it chanced that, while the royal carriage was delayed at the top of Cockspur-street, a roar of laughter suddenly burst from the throng near it, and all eyes were turned towards a house on the right, from a penthouse on which some young men were dangling an immense jack-boot. The allusion was at once understood by the crowd, and the laughter, wholly unchecked by the King's presence, was redoubled.

Some hootings, however, arose as the image of a Scotchman, such as may be seen at the door of a tobacconist's shop, was brought out by the same young men, and set beside the jack-boot in front of the penthouse. The slight expressions of disapproval which the appearance of this figure had occasioned were speedily drowned in the cheers and laughter of the majority of the assemblage.

"What! what! what's that? Hey! hey!" cried the King, in his quick way, looking out of the coach window.

His Majesty spoke so loudly that the inquiry was overheard by those near him, and a voice immediately responded, "It's the new Scotch minister—Jack Boot."

"Hold your tongue, fool!" exclaimed another voice. "Don't you know that Lord Bute is his Majesty's favourite?"

"Pitt's our favourite," cried a third, "and unless we get him back again, we'll drive all the beggarly Scotchmen over the Border."

On this there was a great shout, mingled with cries of "Pitt for ever! No favourite! no Scotch minister!"

On hearing these outcries, the King became very red, and sat back in his coach, looking highly offended.

"These good folks presume rather too much upon their freedom," he said.

"It is their way, no doubt, but perhaps there is no harm in it," replied the Queen softly. "It is not against your Majesty, but against Lord Bute, that these cries are directed."

"The rogues think they can force me by their clamour to take Pitt back again, and give up Bute, but they may shout till they're hoarse; I won't do it—I won't do it."

"Your Majesty will always act for the best; of that I am quite sure," said the Queen; "and the better you are understood by your people the more you will be beloved."

Just then, as if the crowd had become sensible of their indecorous conduct, loud shouts were raised for the King and Queen, and missiles were hurled against the obnoxious jack-boot and Scotchman, which were quickly withdrawn, only to be brought forward again, however, shortly afterwards.

No other incident occurred before the cavalcade was again put in motion, but the King had not reached Charing-cross when a second stoppage took place. Precautions ought to have been taken to prevent these hindrances, but it would seem from their recurrence that they must have been neglected. A vast crowd was here assembled, and of a more miscellaneous character than that which had occupied Pall-Mall and Cockspur-street, a large portion consisting of low rabble. But these poor folk were just as loyal and warm-hearted, however, as their betters, and cheered their young sovereign and his queen most lustily.

It was during his detention, however, at this point that his Majesty was made aware, in an unmistakable manner, of the unpopularity of his favourite. A distant yell was heard, increasing in volume as it was caught up and carried on, which informed the King that Lord Bute's carriage was approaching, and by the time the minister, who now swayed the Cabinet, had joined the royal cavalcade, he was exposed to a perfect storm of indignation.

XI.

THE FAVOURITE.

The object of this popular displeasure, to whom so much allusion has already been made, was a very stately-looking personage, with a serious and almost tragic cast of countenance. He was still in the prime of life, being a year or two under fifty; his features were decidedly handsome, his person tall and elegant, his address courtly though very formal, and his deportment dignified but somewhat theatrical.

Lord Bute's gravity did not seem altogether natural to him, any more than the slow and measured style of speech which he adopted, even in ordinary discourse. His aim was to be weighty and impressive, but he was sententious and affected, and consequently tiresome. Yet his manner pleased the King, and if report was to be trusted, was particularly agreeable to his Majesty's mother, the Princess-Dowager of Wales.

Perhaps, beneath this cold and impressive exterior there lurked a more ardent temperament than seemed natural to him. Undoubtedly Lord Bute possessed great self-mastery, and rarely exhibited emotion of any kind, at least in public. Such a visage as his was well calculated to conceal what was passing within. Each muscle was under control. Not only were his looks, however, carefully studied, but every gesture and accent. In short, he was a consummate actor, and it was mainly owing to his ability in this line that he owed his elevation.

Shortly after the Rebellion of '45, in order to prove his zeal to the House of Hanover, the Earl of Bute, who had for some time retired to the Hebridean Isles, of which he was lord, and from which he derived his title, returned to London, and offered his services to the government, but it is doubtful whether the overtures would have been successful had not an unexpected piece of good luck befallen him.

A series of dramatic performances, given by the Duchess of Queensbury, were honoured by the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales and their court, and on one occasion Rowe's "Fair Penitent" was played, the part of the gallant gay *Lothario* being assigned to Bute, whose remarkable personal advantages, then at their acme, eminently fitted him for the part.

Bute's good looks and graceful person, combined with the passionate ardour thrown by him into the part, so charmed the sensitive Princess that she invited him to her court, and thenceforth he became a constant attendant upon her, and exercised a marked influence in the direction of affairs at Leicester House. He enjoyed equal favour with the Prince, and on the death of the latter—an event that occurred about ten years before the date of our story—he was entrusted by his widow with the care of her eldest son, the heir-presumptive to the throne.

From that time until the young Prince's accession, in 1760, Bute continued to maintain the ascendancy he had obtained over the Princess, while at the same time he had contrived to secure the affections of her son. So apprehensive was he of losing his influence over his royal pupil, that he would scarcely trust him out of his sight. As the Prince grew in years, the wily Scot grew in his credit, and the first act of the young monarch, on mounting the throne, was to make his favourite, then groom of the stole, a member of the privy-council.

But Bute aimed at a far higher mark. Not content to rule by secret influence, he would have direct power. Aspiring, as we have seen, to the first post in the Cabinet, and certain of the King's assent to his wishes, he did not for a moment doubt the realization of the scheme. His design was now all but accomplished. Though merely secretary of state, Lord Holderness having resigned the seals to make way for him, he was virtually prime minister. Pitt, the grand obstacle in his path to greatness, was removed. All-powerful with the King, and with nothing to fear from his pliant colleagues, he only waited the favourable moment to seize upon the coveted prize.

Golden showers at this time descended on the Favourite's head, and Horace Walpole might well term him "one of Fortune's prodigies." "You will allow," writes Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, "that this earl is a fortunate man; the late King, old Wortley, and the Duke of Argyle, all dying in a year, and his daughter married to such an immense fortune." What Bute gained by George the Second's death needs no explanation. Old Wortley Montagu, husband of the celebrated Lady Mary—"old Avidieu," as Horace Walpole elsewhere calls him—was his father-in-law, and left more than a million to the countess. By the demise of the Duke of Argyle, Bute obtained the chief power of Scotland; and his daughter, Lady Mary Stuart, was married at the time the royal nuptials took place to Sir James Lowther, the "Prince of Coal-pits."

On the present occasion the Favourite was attired in black velvet trimmed with gold, and wore his star and riband. Vain of the whiteness and beauty of his hands, he loaded his long taper fingers with rings like a woman.

The opposite side of the carriage was occupied by an excessively corpulent personage—so corpulent, indeed, that he required a seat to himself—whose round, red face, to which a small snub nose lent a decidedly comic expression, was almost buried in an enormous tie-periwig, while his plump hands were quite covered by deep-laced ruffles.

This elderly personage—for elderly he was—whose self-important looks and manner, combined with his extraordinary bulk, were highly provocative of laughter, and rarely failed to excite it, was Bubb Dodington, then recently created Lord Melcomb—a veteran courtier and politician.

Embarrassed by no scruples, venal and corrupt as were most of the placemen of the time, Bubb Dodington, from his long experience and sagacity, was precisely the person to be serviceable to the aspiring Favourite, and he proved himself so able an instrument, that he was rewarded by a peerage, the grand object of his ambition.

Son of an apothecary at Carlisle, who had married a lady of condition far superior to his own, Bubb Dodington rose by his talents to his present position. He possessed great conversational powers and much wit, courted the society of men of letters, and numbered amongst his friends Chesterfield, Fielding, Gray, Thomson, and Dr Bentley. Though excessively vain, he was good-natured, and if much ridiculed, was generally liked. He was accustomed to array his bulky person in gaudy and flaring suits, and his preposterous perukes were ridiculed both by Churchill and Hogarth.

On the present occasion he was as fine as fine could be, in a coat of gold brocaded tissue, a waistcoat of lilac-coloured silk, breeches of the same material, white silk stockings, which made his legs look perfectly colossal, and red-heeled shoes with diamond buckles.

"I fear we shall have a tedious ride to the City, my lord," said Lord Melcomb, proffering his diamond snuff-box to Lord Bute, who, however, declined the attention. "These constant stoppages are very tiresome."

"Excessively so," replied the other. "They almost seem contrived to give the insolent rabble an opportunity of displaying their animosity to me. But that it would be said I fear to show myself in the City, I would have declined the Lord Mayor's invitation to the Guildhall to-day. The whole thing is highly distasteful to me, and the noise and turbulence of this canaille are well-nigh intolerable. The uproar is as stunning as the storm of an angry audience at a playhouse. There's nothing for it but to stop one's ears."

"Better laugh at it as I do, my lord," rejoined Melcomb, consoling himself with another pinch of snuff.

The Favourite's carriage was followed by that of the Duke of Newcastle, First Lord of the Treasury, with whom rode the Duke of Bedford, Lord Privy Seal. The Duke of Newcastle, who, in spite of age and infirmities, still clung pertinaciously to power, was a little man, shrivelled in person and wrinkled in features, and his nervous anxiety about his health and fear of taking cold often exposed him to the ridicule of his colleagues. His political life had commenced above forty years ago, and he had filled the most important posts during the two previous reigns. Very wealthy, and having a vast number of boroughs under his control, he possessed immense parliamentary influence, and hence his long retention of power. He had his merits as a statesman, but they were counteracted by indecision and feebleness, and latterly, during Pitt's tenure of office, he had completely submitted to the sway of that master-spirit.

The next carriage contained George Grenville, Lord Temple's brother, a statesman of unquestionable ability, and then leader of the House of Commons. Grenville was accompanied by Lord Egremont, recently appointed secretary of state in room of Pitt. Other carriages followed, containing the rest of the ministers, the representatives of the courts of Versailles and Madrid, the Duc de Nivernais and the Conde de Fuentes, the Algerine ambassador, with other foreign ambassadors and officers of state.

During its passage along the Strand, the royal cavalcade met with repeated, and, it would seem, needless interruptions. One of these occurred near the New Exchange, and gave an opportunity to the crowd there assembled to manifest their loyalty and regard for the young King and his consort, and their dislike of the Favourite. The cheers and blessings with which the monarch was greeted changed into groans and hootings at the sight of the unpopular minister. The Duke of Newcastle himself was hissed. The mob were kept back from pressing upon the carriages by a strong military force, as well as abundance of peace-officers, or still greater annoyance might have been experienced.

Very different was the appearance of this great thoroughfare, along which the cavalcade was now slowly taking its way, from that presented by it now-a-days. Badly paved, without a smooth footway for the pedestrian, having a deep kennel in the middle of the road, the Strand, on crowded occasions like the present, was inconvenient and even dangerous. Still there was something picturesque in the aspect of the shops, with their immense carved and gilt signs projecting many yards into the street, and embellished with every possible device—golden periwigs, blackamoors' heads with gilt hair, half-moons, sugar-loaves, &c. — and as all these signs were now decorated with streamers, flags, and ornaments, they looked gayer than usual. Of course the shops were closed, but the upper windows were garnished with spectators, as were the roofs of the buildings. Expressions of loyalty and devotion everywhere awaited the King, but the Favourite was saluted with derisive cheers, contemptuous outcries, and hissing.

By this time the head of the cavalcade had reached Temple-bar, the gates of which, according to custom, were closed. Trumpets were then sounded, and when their bray ceased, the High Constable of Westminster, who had attended the cavalcade with his staff, rode up with a pursuivant and a serjeant of arms, and knocked against them. On this a wicket was opened, and the under City marshal, with the herald and two yeomen of the guard, bearing halberds, came forth from it and inquired the cause of the summons. The High Constable, removing his hat, replied that his Majesty King George the Third desired permission of the Lord Mayor to enter his good city of London. At the same time the pursuivant delivered a warrant to the marshal.

"Permission is right willingly granted by the Lord Mayor," replied the marshal, "and I am charged by his lordship, in his own name, and in the name of his fellow-citizens, to bid his Majesty and his Royal Consort hearty welcome to their loyal and dutiful city of London."

"God save the King!" cried the herald. And the exclamation was repeated by a hundred voices.

The gates were then unbarred and thrown wide open, and the cavalcade passed through them, the trumpeters making its arch resound with their blasts. Here the High Constable of Westminster, with his staff, retired, their places being now taken by the City officers.

From this point, as already intimated, to the top of Ludgate-hill, both sides of the road were guarded by regiments of the Trained Bands, or City Militia, in their full equipments. The street being narrower, and the crowd equally numerous, the pressure was very great, and it was with some difficulty that order could be maintained. Drums beat, trumpets were blown, and tremendous shouts were raised as the King passed through Temple-bar. These acclamations, proceeding from an immense concourse of people, were continued as the royal pair passed along, and could not fail to be highly gratifying to them.

But if the good citizens were eager to demonstrate their loyalty to their sovereign, they seemed equally resolved to manifest their dislike of the Favourite. No sooner had Lord Bute entered the City than he found himself exposed to the full burst of popular indignation. To repress it was impossible. The yelling and groaning rabble cared not for the menaces of the constables and the militia, and an attempt to arrest any of them would have instantly caused a tumult not to be easily quelled. Besides, the mob were cheered on by the occupants of windows, balconies, and scaffoldings, many of whom added their voices to the clamour, and hooted and yelled as heartily as the rest. The uproar was indescribable, and the King's carriage not being more than a hundred yards in advance of that of the Favourite, the noise, mingling with the acclamations bestowed upon himself, reached his ears. The national prejudice against Lord Bute's country, which at that time had not been entirely overcome, inflamed the popular passion, and it was looked upon as an additional offence that the Favourite was a Scotsman. No injurious epithet, no taunt, no insult that animosity could devise, was spared him.

"Down with the Scotch minion! Send him back to his own country!" was the cry of one party.

"No Newcastle coal—no Scotch coal for us! We burn Pitt coal in the City!" shouted others.

"Does your lordship desire to know why Sir Gresham Lorimer was elected Lord Mayor?" shouted a stout citizen from a balcony, addressing Lord Bute.

As this individual possessed the lungs of a Stentor, he made himself heard above the tumult.

"We'll tell him," responded the mob from below. "It was because his lordship called Sir Gresham a 'busy meddler.' That was enough for us."

"Who proposed a dishonourable peace?" shouted one voice.

"Who would sell us to France?" cried another.

"Who would make us the laughing-stock of Spain?" added a third.

"Who abuses the King's favour?" roared a fourth.

"Who has robbed us of our patriot minister—of our Great Commoner?" vociferated a fifth.

"Lord Bute," rejoined the Stentor in the balcony—"Lord Bute, the upstart, the Lothario of private life, the Scotch minion, the modern Mortimer, the betrayer of his country!"

"'Chacun à son But,' said Miss Chudleigh to the Princess," cried another voice. "But we won't have Bute at any price."

In such terms, and in language far more scurrilous, was the Favourite assailed by the concourse. Everything which it was supposed could gall him was uttered. Lord Bute, however, bore the ordeal to which he was exposed without flinching, and betrayed no sign of annoyance.

Incredible as it may sound, there did not seem any disposition to check the licence of the mob. On the contrary, the militia and constables appeared mightily amused by what was taking place, while the better part of the spectators applauded the mob, and cheered them on.

Meanwhile, the royal cavalcade continued its course, but so slowly that nearly two hours elapsed before it reached St Paul's Churchyard, at the east end of which, as we have already mentioned, a scaffold was erected for the students of Christ's Hospital, and the King halting beside it, an address was read to his Majesty by the senior scholar, at the close of which all the young voices united in chanting the national anthem. Both the King and Queen appeared much pleased by this display of youthful loyalty.

We shall not follow the royal pair along Cheapside, but bring them at once to Mr Barclay's house, where the Duke of Cumberland, with the young Princes and their mother, had already alighted.

On quitting their carriage, their Majesties were ceremoniously conducted to the rooms prepared for their reception. In the same place, shortly afterwards, to his infinite relief, Lord Bute found shelter from the ceaseless persecution he had endured on his way to the City.

"I should like to have these cursed citizens in my power for a day," he observed to Lord Melcomb, as they went upstairs together. "I would make them mend their manners."

XII.

THE GREAT COMMONER.

Meantime an unpretending-looking chariot and pair, having two persons inside it, had entered the City.

This carriage had not proceeded farther than the gates of Inner Temple-lane, when a stoppage occurred, during which the gentlemen occupying it were recognized as Mr Pitt and his brother-in-law, Lord Temple.

The news spread like wildfire, and was instantaneously communicated to the prodigious concourse in Fleet-street. The effect was electric. A shout was raised, the like of which was never before heard in that quarter, and may never be heard again. The populace seemed frenzied. In an instant, and notwithstanding their opposition, the peace-officers and trained bands on either side of the street were swept away by the irresistible force of the mob, and the carriage was surrounded by hundreds of persons, all in a state of frantic excitement. Those nearest the vehicle, however, put no bounds to their enthusiasm, but looked in at the windows, and invoked blessings on Pitt's head; others shook hands with the coachman and footmen; and others, delirious with joy, flung their arms about the horses.

Fain would they have drawn the carriage themselves, but this Mr Pitt would on no account allow. Profoundly touched by this extraordinary and unmistakable display of popular sympathy, he warmly thanked his idolaters for their zeal, but besought them to be more calm. But even his words were of no avail in checking the ebullition. The crowd listened to him only to cheer him the louder when he ceased to speak. All he could prevail upon them to do was to allow his carriage to proceed at a foot's pace, while they marched beside it as a body-guard, shouting till they were hoarse, denouncing his enemies, and waving their hats and sticks.

Never was there a more enthusiastic or clamorous escort. Moreover, the lines of the militia being broken, order could no longer be maintained. Thousands poured into the street and followed the Great Commoner's carriage, which, as it slowly advanced, seemed at the head of an army. Enthusiastic demonstrations were not confined, however, to the concourse in the streets. The spectators at the windows, in the balconies, on the stands, on the house-tops, were equally vociferous. The frenzy seemed to be contagious. Every one coming under its influence appeared equally excited.

Some description must be attempted of the personal appearance of one of the first of England's statesmen, and incomparably her greatest orator, though we despair of giving an idea of that marvellously expressive countenance, cast in the proudest mould, and stamped by the loftiest intelligence—the magnificent brow, made marble pale by constant thought—the eagle eye, that penetrated the very soul of him on whom it fell—the aquiline nose—the haughty lips, which could give vent to such a flood of eloquence as none other ever poured forth.

These were his lineaments; but to judge of their full effect, you should have seen them kindled by the fiery soul within, the eye flashing lightnings, the lips breathing scorn, and every feature impressed with the thought to which the eloquent tongue gave utterance. You should have seen his tall majestic figure, thin and wasted by the cruel malady to which he was a martyr, reared to its full height—have marked his patrician look and deportment, his dignified and appropriate gestures—and above all, have listened to his wonderful delivery—grand, sonorous, impassioned, persuasive, menacing, terrible—thunder not more awful than his loudest and deepest tones.

"England," said Frederick the Great, speaking of Pitt, "has at length brought forth A MAN." Nature, indeed, as we have just endeavoured to show, had endowed the Great Commoner with her richest gifts—a stately person, a noble countenance, an eagle glance, and a magnificent voice, susceptible of every variety of intonation, persuasive in argument, terrific in invective. Of the latter power he early gave proof when taunted with youth and a tendency to theatrical declamation by Sir Robert Walpole, and his bitter rebuke of that minister was not speedily forgotten.

Born without fortune, some fifty-three years before the date of our story, but of a good family, Pitt entered the army as cornet of the Blues, but being disqualified from active military duty by frequent attacks of gout, he directed his attention to politics, towards which he had a strong bias, and speedily distinguished himself in parliament.

It is not our intention to follow him through his glorious career, to show how he bore down all opposition, and asserted his supremacy. To such a point of greatness had he risen, that on the accession of George III., he might, without strain of metaphor, be said to hold in his hands the destinies of the world.

Human ambition has no higher mark than he had reached. In five years he had raised his country from the abject condition to which it had been reduced by incapacity and mismanagement—a condition so abject as positively to inspire despair—to the highest point of prosperity and power.

Such had been the glorious result of the Great Commoner's administration. To him alone was the credit due of our conquests, both by sea and land, since it was he who directed our armies and navies. Measures so mighty could have been conceived by no mind inferior to his own, neither, if formed, could they have been carried out by a spirit less intrepid; but genius and courage were united in Pitt, and the result of his gigantic projects showed how admirably they had been planned.

While waging war, in the Old and New Worlds, with unprecedented vigour, he opened up new and vast spheres for Commerce. If he lavishly expended the treasures of state so freely entrusted to him, he employed them well and profitably, to the immense extension of our dominions, and to the increase of our wealth.

Moreover he was as disinterested as patriotic. At a time when all other statesmen were self-seeking and corrupt, he was free from any debasing taint. With every opportunity of enriching himself, he disdained to do so by means which he deemed dishonourable. As Paymaster, he declined the immense perquisites of the office, and renounced all subsidies, contenting himself with the bare salary.

That after such honourable conduct, and the unexampled services rendered by him to his country, he should be blamed for accepting a pension, can only be attributed to the malice of party. The nation quickly exonerated him, and felt that he had been most inadequately rewarded. It also felt no slight apprehension that in losing the pilot who had so long and so skilfully guided the vessel of state through difficulty and danger, disasters might ensue.

Certain it is, that if Pitt had not been baffled by the intrigues of Bute, but had carried out his plans against France and Spain with his accustomed vigour, both powers must have been speedily and effectually humbled, and the war brought to a glorious termination. It was this conviction that so much incensed the populace against the Favourite, and roused such a fervent demonstration of regard towards himself.

In manner Pitt was haughty, sometimes imperious. The habit of command made him overbearing and impatient of contradiction. Exacting the utmost respect from all about him, his secretaries were never allowed to be seated in his presence. But though proud he was not repelling, while his imperiousness was never exhibited except to those of rank superior to his own.

Such was England's greatest statesman at the moment when the power, which he had ever used for the wisest and best purposes, was wrested from his hands by a miserable intriguer, aided by his perfidious colleagues.

Pitt's brother-in-law, Lord Temple, a very influential and wealthy nobleman, who had lately succeeded to the estates of his uncle, Lord Cobham, was himself distinguished for parliamentary abilities. He had been a member of the Cabinet, but had resigned at the same time as Pitt, whom he staunchly supported. Lord Temple's hatred of the Favourite was even more intense than Pitt's, and it was mainly owing to his persuasions, coupled with those of Mr Beckford, that the Great Commoner had been induced to go into the City on that day. Temple and Beckford desired to humiliate Bute, and in this they succeeded almost beyond their expectations. But Pitt had no petty malice in his composition, and though deeply gratified by his own reception, he was pained by the indignities offered to his rival, and began to regret the step he had taken.

No such regrets, however, were felt by Lord Temple. Charmed with the great popular demonstration in behalf of his brother-in-law, he laughed heartily at the Favourite's discomfiture. Plenty of tongues were eager to tell him what had happened to Lord Bute, how he had been jeered and hooted, and compelled to hide his head.

As the Great Commoner approached the various scaffolds erected by the City companies, the cheering was prodigious. The wardens and prime-wardens uncovered, and their bands struck up. In Cheapside Pitt's escort received an accession of forces, and as the moving masses approached Mr Barclay's house, their Majesties and the royal family came forth to look at the scene, and were loudly cheered.

Bute, however, had the prudence not to show himself, or the presence of his royal master might not have protected him from insult. Though such a popular demonstration could not be pleasing to the King, the behaviour of the crowd was so decorous that exception could not be taken to it.

In this manner was Mr Pitt escorted to Guildhall.

Having brought him to his destination, the crowd quietly withdrew from the streets, and left them clear for the Lord Mayor's procession.

XIII.

HOW THE LADY MAYORESS JOINED THE PROCESSION ON ITS RETURN, AND OF THE DISASTER THAT BEFELL HER.

So many unavoidable delays occurred, that it was full four o'clock ere the head of the civic procession, on its return from Westminster, passed the balcony in Cheapside occupied by the royal party, and another hour flew by before the Lord Mayor's coach approached the same spot. Their Majesties, however, did not seem wearied by the length of the show, but, on the contrary, were greatly amused by the pageants, and the humours of the mob.

The Lady Mayoress joined the procession at Temple-bar, and the superb chariot, drawn by six fine horses, in which her ladyship sat, immediately preceded the Lord Mayor's coach. Magnificent indeed did she look in her gorgeous attire, and it was fortunate that her chariot was lofty enough to allow her to occupy it without detriment to her towering head-dress.

Sir Felix Bland's predictions as to the effect certain to be produced by her "head" were literally fulfilled. It astonished all beholders; and if more merriment and ridicule were excited than admiration, her ladyship was happily unaware of the fact, and persuaded herself she created quite a sensation.

No one in the procession was prouder than she. Puffed up by fancied consequence, she regarded the crowd as something infinitely beneath her, and scarcely deserving notice. Their acclamations were taken as rightful homage to her exalted position, and if she acknowledged them at all, it was with marked condescension.

In this manner the Lady Mayoress moved triumphantly along, believing herself envied and admired. At any unusual outburst from the throng she would slightly incline her lofty "head," or droop her fan. This was all the notice she vouchsafed the lookers-on, and quite as much as she thought they deserved.

Her grand effect was reserved for the royal party, though her confidence somewhat abated and her breast began to flutter as she neared them, and noticed—for she was watching them narrowly from behind her fan—that their Majesties exchanged rather significant looks, while some remark made by the King caused a smile to pervade the whole of the royal circle.

Could they be laughing at her? Impossible! Slightly disconcerted, however, she prepared for her obeisance, and looking towards the balcony reverently bent her head.

Alas! she could not raise it again. The summit of the immense superstructure had gone through the open window and could not be drawn back.

To struggle with the difficulty would have made matters ten times worse. But what a frightful position to be placed in, with the eyes of their Majesties and the royal family upon her—and with the irrepressible laughter of all who witnessed the occurrence, and were mightily entertained by it, ringing in her ears.

She thought she must have swooned, and probably she would have done so, had not the footman, seated between her and the coachman, relieved her from the dilemma, though not without some little damage to her feathers and bands.

The King was vastly diverted by the incident, and laughed heartily at it, and we may be sure that the rest of the royal party joined in the merriment.

His Majesty had not quite recovered from his hilarity when the Lord Mayor's coach came up. But he found nothing to laugh at now. Sir Gresham had already been presented to him, when, as Lord Mayor elect, he had waited upon his Majesty, after the coronation, to invite him and his consort to the civic banquet.

On that occasion, in spite of Lord Bute's disparaging remarks and sneers, he had formed a very favourable opinion of the worthy citizen, and he was no less pleased now; and being accustomed to give utterance to his thoughts, he said so pretty plainly.

Very reverentially did Sir Gresham bow to their Majesties as he went by, and very graciously did they return the salutation. Amid universal cheering, addressed as much to the City magnate as to the monarch, the state-coach moved on, and took its way up New King-street.

The sheriffs came next, but did not proceed farther than Mr Barclay's house. Here they alighted, in order to conduct their Majesties to Guildhall.

XIV.

THE BANQUET AT GUILDHALL.

Many of the distinguished personages bidden to the entertainment had already arrived at Guildhall, and were received by the aldermen composing the committee, and conducted by the ushers and other officials to the apartments adjoining the great hall prepared for them.

Among these important guests were the foreign ministers, including the French and Spanish ambassadors, and the Algerine and Tripoline ambassador and his son, in their muslin turbans and long gowns of flowered and laced silk, many of the principal nobility, the members of the privy council, the Lord Chancellor and the judges, and the lords and ladies in waiting.

On their entrance, the names of all these persons were thundered forth, so that the ladies in the galleries were at no loss as to whom they beheld, and while the ushers marshalled them at a slow and stately pace between the two lines of common-councilmen drawn up across the hall, abundance of time was allowed for the gratification of curiosity.

But though many great names were proclaimed, none created anything like the sensation caused by the announcement of those of Lord Temple and Mr Pitt. No sooner was the tall and majestic figure of the Great Commoner discerned within the hall, than the whole of the ladies arose as if by a common impulse, waving their handkerchiefs and loudly expressing their admiration, while all the common-councilmen, with the company and attendants scattered about the vast chamber, cheered and clapped their hands. Visibly touched, Mr Pitt paused, looked around, and placing his hand upon his heart, bowed to both galleries; after which he passed on, amid reiterated cheering.

It was past five o'clock before the Lord Mayor arrived at Guildhall. By this time, it having become dusk, the thousands of wax tapers in the chandeliers, lustres, girandoles, and sconces were lighted, producing an extraordinarily brilliant effect, which was heightened by the ropes of lamps already described as hung around the great cornice.

His lordship immediately retired to his private chamber, where he found the Lady Mayoress, and had to listen to her description of the direful disaster that had befallen her, but her head-dress having been already set to rights by M. le Gros, the coiffeur, who was in attendance, he could not afford her much sympathy.

Shortly afterwards they were joined by Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, both of whom had changed their attire, and were now in full evening dresses, and looked uncommonly well. As may be expected from their passion for high society, they were enraptured with the Duchess of Richmond and the two countesses, and told Sir Gresham they were mightily obliged to him for sending such charming guests.

"But where's Milly?" cried the Lord Mayor, not perceiving his favourite daughter.

"Oh! don't trouble yourself about her, papa!" exclaimed Lady Dawes. "I'm quite ashamed of her. She's in one of the galleries with that underbred creature who intruded herself upon us this morning with her brother, and whom you were foolish enough—excuse me for saying so—to acknowledge as your niece before Tradescant's fashionable friends."

"Foolish indeed you may well call it, dearest Livy," cried the Lady Mayoress. "It was the height of folly. I never felt so humiliated in all my born days. But Milly is just as absurd. She has lent her cousin, as she stupidly calls her, one of her own dresses, and has brought her here to disgrace us. But they shan't dine at my table—on that I'm resolved."

"Nor at mine," said Lady Dawes.

"And I'm quite sure they shan't dine with me," added Mrs Chatteris.

"Then it's lucky I am able to accommodate them," observed Sir Gresham, dryly.

"I'm of Tradescant's opinion," said Mrs Chatteris, "and feel quite sure the girl and her brother will prove arrant impostors. Your credulity has been shockingly abused, papa. To say the least, it was highly imprudent to place credence in the assertions of absolute strangers, without making any inquiries about them. But even if they turn out what they represent themselves, you cannot expect us to notice such low people."

"Certainly not, dearest Chloris," said the Lady Mayoress. "Your papa cannot expect such a thing."

"But I *do* expect it," exclaimed the Lord Mayor, "and, what is more, I insist upon it. Unless you mean to offend me, you will treat them as relations. What will you say, when I tell you I've found another long-lost member of my family?"

"Oh! I don't doubt it," cried the Lady Mayoress, with asperity. "Relations will become as plentiful as blackberries with you, Sir Gresham, if you're ready to acknowledge them at a moment's notice. But I hope the one last discovered is an improvement upon those we have just been talking about."

"Hum! I can't exactly say that," rejoined Sir Gresham. "But you shall see him by-and-by, and judge. I wonder what he has been about—I must inquire. Here, Jenkins," he added, stepping to the door of a small inner room, "what have you done with Mr Candish? Did you provide him with a dress-suit as I directed?"

"I beg your lordship's pardon," replied the attendant, advancing towards him; "I have not seen the gentleman in question."

"Not seen him!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor, angrily. "Why, I sent him to you with Staveley, the beadle."

"Staveley has been here, my lord; but, unfortunately—"

"Well! what? What the deuce has happened?"

"Mr Candish has decamped, my lord. Staveley feared your lordship would be angry, and begged me to say it wasn't his fault. Mr Candish took him quite unawares. Staveley would have sent after him, but he has no clue to his address."

"Well, this is provoking!" cried Sir Gresham; "very provoking! I must try to find him out to-morrow."

And he turned away, striving to conquer his vexation.

At this moment the door opened, and Tradescant entered the room.

"Have you seen your cousin Herbert?" said Sir Gresham, rather hastily to his son.

"I've seen the young man whom you have taken under your protection," replied Tradescant, "but I didn't choose to comply with the order he brought me. I wasn't going to let him have a suit of my clothes."

"I should think not," exclaimed the Lady Mayoress. "You would have been a precious simpleton if you had."

"Better be a simpleton than disobedient," rejoined the Lord Mayor, sternly. "I won't have my orders disputed, Tradescant."

"But, father—"

"This is not a time for discussion," interrupted the Lord Mayor, authoritatively; "neither would I permit it, were the occasion more suitable. What has become of Herbert?"

"I don't know," replied the young man, rather sullenly. "He was at our house in Cheapside when I left."

"And you have prevented him from attending the banquet? Upon my soul, Tradescant, I am very angry with you."

"It is a slight matter to cause you so much displeasure, sir," rejoined his son.

"I don't think it slight—but let that pass. Go home at once, and see whether your cousin is still there."

"He shall do no such thing," interposed the Lady Mayoress.

"If you find him," continued Sir Gresham, without heeding her, "let him have the best suit in your wardrobe, and bring him back with you. If he has left, you need not trouble yourself to return. Do you mark me, sir?"

"I do, father," replied the young man. "You cannot mean this, papa?" cried Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris together.

"Your brother understands me," replied the Lord Mayor, coldly.

Perceiving that his father was inflexible, Tradescant moved towards the door, but, ere he could reach it, it was opened, and admitted Herbert.

To the surprise of every one present, but to no one more than Tradescant, Herbert was arrayed in a suit of flowered velvet, which fitted him to perfection, and displayed his symmetrical person to the utmost advantage. His appearance was so much improved by the change of attire, that Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris began to view him with more favourable eyes, thinking such a handsome young fellow would do them no discredit.

After staring at him for a moment, Tradescant exclaimed, "How's this, sir? You have presumed to make free with my wardrobe, after all!"

"I certainly owe you an apology for the liberty I have taken, cousin," replied Herbert, "but I felt bound to obey my uncle's orders."

"You have done quite right," cried Sir Gresham, "and Tradescant ought to feel obliged to you for getting him out of a scrape. I have a right, methinks, to dispose of some of his apparel, seeing that I pay his tailors' bills—and they are heavy enough in all conscience—without a murmur. All's right now. I don't want any more explanations. There isn't time for them. Hark ye, Herbert! You must find out your new friends, the Walworths, and bring them to my table, where I have had places reserved for them."

"I saw them on my way hither, among the company in the great hall, uncle," replied Herbert. "Your directions respecting them shall be attended to."

"Tradescant," pursued his father, "as soon as their Majesties arrive, you must go for Millicent and your cousin Prue. Lady Dawes will tell you where to find them, and bring them to the council-chamber. I wish them to see the presentations. D'ye heed?"

His son gave a reluctant assent, and the Lord Mayor retired to the inner chamber to have his robes adjusted, preparatory to the approaching ceremonies.

Shortly afterwards Sir Felix Bland, accompanied by two sergeants of the chamber carrying wands, entered to announce that the royal family were momentarily expected; upon which, the Lord Mayor came forth from the inner room, and proceeded with the Lady Mayoress to the foot of the steps leading from the inner courts to the great hall.

Here it had been arranged that they should receive their illustrious guests, and here were already assembled the aldermen composing the committee, several common-councilmen, the Lord Mayor's chaplain, the sword-bearer, the common-crier, the common-hunt, with some gentlemen of the Lord Mayor's household, attended by servants in state liveries, and supported by the band of gentlemen pensioners bearing halberds. The latter lined the steps on either side; and at the entrance to the hall were stationed half a dozen tall yeomen of the guard.

From this point to the opposite side of the hall, drawn up in two rows, stood the whole of the aldermen not on the committee, in scarlet gowns, flanked by common-councilmen in mazarine gowns. The pavement was covered with scarlet cloth.

Farther on, within the vestibule already described, stood the two City marshals with their men, the chamberlain with several ushers bearing wands, supported by javelin men. The passage beyond was lined on either side by Mazarines holding tall wax tapers.

The first of the royal family to pass between these candle-bearers was the Princess Amelia. Escorted across the hall by the chamberlain and the City marshal, she was received with every mark of respect by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, and conducted by Sir Felix Bland and Mr Beckford to the council-chamber, which was spread with Turkey carpet, richly decorated, and brilliantly lighted up for the occasion.

Sir Felix, it need scarcely be said, was enchanted with the post assigned him, and bowed to the ground, and glided backwards like a practised courtier. He fared very well with the Princess, but met with a terrible rebuff from her brother, the Duke of Cumberland, who came next, leaning upon an attendant, and who, not being in a particularly good humour, swore at the officious little alderman, and bade him to stand out of the way. Sir Felix, however, was consoled by reflecting that the hero of Culloden had been very badly received out of doors, which might account for his ill temper.

After an interval came the three young Princes, who were greeted with loud clapping of hands; then their mother, the Princess-Dowager of Wales, with her daughters; and then the Duke of York. The Princess-Dowager, who courted popularity, was exceedingly affable to the Lady Mayoress. The Duke of York and his brothers remained in the body of the hall, amusing themselves with ogling the ladies in the galleries.

Presently, intimation being given that their Majesties had arrived, the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, with the aldermen of the committee and the other officers, crossed the hall, and stationed themselves near the doorway.

On the entrance of their Majesties, the whole of the assemblage arose. Taking the sword from the bearer, the Lord Mayor knelt down and offered it to the King, who bowed graciously, but of course declined to take the weapon. While this ceremonial was being performed, the bands in both orchestras struck up, and as the King marched slowly across the great hall, preceded by the Lord Mayor bearing the sword, and followed by the Queen, with the Lady Mayoress following her Majesty, the acclamations became so loud as almost to drown the music. The body of the hall was quite full, and the company here assembled vied with the fair occupants of the galleries in demonstrations of loyalty.

Both their Majesties were evidently much pleased, and the King, as he went along, loudly expressed his gratification to the bowing aldermen on either side.

As to the Lady Mayoress, this was unquestionably the proudest moment of her life. Never before, as she subsequently owned, had she felt "so lifted up." She could not help appropriating some of the applause, and felt herself a very important part of the show.

After the Lady Mayoress came the Queen's ladies, the Duchess of Hamilton, Lady Effingham (Mr Beckford's daughter), the Countesses of Northumberland and Egremont, and the Ladies Weymouth and Bolingbroke. Their Majesties were conducted to the council-chamber by the aldermen of the committee, and as soon as the Lord Mayor and his royal guests and the whole of their attendants had entered it, an address was offered to the King by Sir William Moreton, the Recorder.

This being concluded, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris were presented, and had the honour of being saluted by his Majesty and of kissing the Queen's hand; but though the Lord Mayor looked anxiously round among the brilliant throng for his youngest daughter and his niece, he could nowhere discern them. He afterwards learned that Millicent, of whose shyness and timidity the reader is aware, could not be prevailed upon to enter the room.

Bashfulness, however, could not be laid to the charge of either of his other daughters. They seemed quite at their ease with the exalted personages among whom they found themselves, and chatted in a very lively manner with the Duke of York and the young Princes.

The Duke, who was a great admirer of beauty, seemed particularly struck with Lady Dawes, and engaged her to open the ball with him in a minuet, while Prince William, not to be behind his brother in gallantry, made a similar engagement with Mrs Chatteris.

While this was going on, to the infinite delight of the Lady Mayoress, who ever and anon cast an eye of approval at her favourite daughters, several aldermen's wives and daughters were presented. After this, the sheriffs received the honour of knighthood, and rose up Sir Nathaniel Nash and Sir John Cartwright.

Their Majesties remained some little time longer within the council-chamber, graciously conversing with the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, when two officers with white staves entered to announce that the banquet was served—a piece of information which the King good-naturedly declared he was not sorry to receive. Hereupon, the Lord Mayor again assumed the sword, and preceded their Majesties through a side-door opening upon the elevated platform on which the royal table was set.

By this time the greater part of the distinguished company had assembled at the different tables in the body of the hall, but all remained standing until their Majesties had taken their places beneath the canopy, and grace was solemnly said by the chaplain. None but the members of the royal family dined at the upper table.

The entertainment was of the most sumptuous description, and unusual ceremony was observed throughout the service. The dishes were set upon the table by the seven aldermen on the committee, and they alone waited on the royal guests.

And here it must be admitted that Sir Felix distinguished himself beyond all his colleagues, and seemed to have discovered his true vocation. None of his brother aldermen were half so attentive as he; could change a plate so quickly, set on a dish so well, or pour out wine with so much grace. His Majesty told him he should like to have him always for a butler, and Sir Felix was deeply gratified by the compliment.

At the commencement of the banquet the Lord Mayor stationed himself behind the King, and the Lady Mayoress took up a similar position near her Majesty, but their services were immediately dispensed with, and committing their royal guests to the care of the sedulous aldermen, they retired by the side-door, and proceeded to their respective tables.

By this time the feasting had begun in earnest. Numerous tureens of turtle were placed on every table throughout the hall, and their contents liberally dispensed. Fish followed of every variety, and of rare excellence, and at a later period of the repast the boards groaned beneath the weight of many a well-fatted haunch of venison.

No distinction was made in regard to the tables. All were equally well supplied. The ministers, nobles, and foreign ambassadors, though they dined off silver plate, and had magnificent epergnes and gilt flagons before them, fared no better than the Mazarines at the lower end of the hall.

Nor was the wine inferior to the viands, or less plentifully supplied. Hock, champagne, and Burgundy of the choicest quality flowed freely. Punch—such only as the City can compound—of course followed the turtle. At the proper period the loving cup went round with all the ancient formalities.

But the most picturesque accompaniments to this most splendid entertainment were, perhaps, the two lordly barons of beef, with the carvers in the costume of Henry the Eighth's time. Placed on the stages already described as erected on the right and left of the hustings, in silver dishes capacious enough to hold them, these enormous joints—evidences of the unbounded hospitality of our ancestors—were decorated with large flags, one of which bore the royal arms, and the other the arms of the City, and were carved with wonderful skill by the indefatigable Mr Towse and the sergeant carvers—the latter habited as we have just mentioned. Mountainous as were these masses of meat at the beginning of the feast, such was the incessant demand upon them that little was left at the close, while Mr Towse, who was well-nigh exhausted, was glad to relinquish his post.

But we are anticipating matters, and must return to an earlier stage of the banquet, when the appetites of the guests were as yet unsatiated. Though it will be impossible to describe the numerous and brilliant company, or do more than glance at the tables at which they were seated, it may be well to inquire where some of our friends were placed.

By his uncle's thoughtful directions seats were assigned to Herbert, and his new friends the Walworths, at the Lord Mayor's own table, and the young man, who was astonished at the splendour of the entertainment, had the happiness of sitting between Alice and her mother; neither of whom appeared the worse for their cold-bath of the morning.

The old hosier was enchanted, and while revelling upon the good things set before him, or washing them down with brimmers of Johannisberg and Clos Vougeot, congratulated himself upon the lucky accident that had brought him to such a glorious feast.

Worthy Sir Gresham was not a little pleased with his nephew's good looks and good manners—the latter being far better than he expected—and he received many compliments on the young man's gallant appearance. Ever and anon his thoughts reverted to his poor brother, and he wished he could have been present on the occasion. Millicent and Prue dined at the same table, and were not far removed from the Lord Mayor.

The Lady Mayoress, who, as we have already mentioned, had three tables allotted to her, was assisted by Tradescant and Captain Chatteris, and did the honours to the lords and ladies in waiting, and to other persons of the highest distinction.

Mrs Chatteris presided at the table next her mother, and perhaps had the gayest and liveliest party in the hall, her guests being chiefly young men of fashion, sprigs of nobility, and officers of the Guards. Among them were Sir Francis Dashwood, Sir William Stanhope, Tom Potter, and Wilkes, and the droll stories and witticisms of the latter kept those near him in a continual state of merriment.

The care of the third, or outer table, devolved upon Lady Dawes, who was supported by Lord Sandwich and Lord Ligonier, commanding officer of the Guards. Many other persons of rank were among her guests, and her table had a charm such as none other could boast—being graced by the presence of the three court beauties, the Duchess of Richmond, and the Countesses of Pembroke and Kildare. Lord Sandwich, who was desperately smitten by Lady Dawes's charms, was devoted in his attentions to her, but they fell unheeded. Her fickle ladyship was thinking of the handsome Duke of York. What chance against a Prince of the Blood had a peer of the realm?

As to the more important personages in whom interest may be felt, we may mention that the Earl of Bute and Lord Melcomb dined with the Duke of Newcastle and the rest of the ministers and privy-councillors.

At an adjoining table, with the foreign ambassadors and some of the principal nobility, sat Lord Temple and Mr Pitt.

None of the ceremonials customary at such grand entertainments were omitted. While the second course was being brought in, the common crier, in obedience to a mandate from the King, advanced to the front of the platform and demanded silence, and amid the hush that followed, proclaimed, in a loud voice, that his Majesty drank to the health and prosperity of the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and commons of the City of London, adding that her Majesty the Queen joined in the toast. As the crier ceased the bands struck up the march in Judas Maccabæus.

When this grand composition was concluded the common crier descended to the Lord Mayor's table, and again demanding silence, proclaimed that the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and commons drank health, long life, and a prosperous reign to his Majesty King George the Third, and his royal consort Queen Charlotte.

On this the whole company stood up and faced the platform, the gentlemen raising their glasses enthusiastically. The national anthem was then sung, in which all the assemblage united, and at its close the cheering was universal.

The sight at this moment of the ladies in the galleries waving their handkerchiefs, and the enthusiastic demonstrations of the company in the body of the hall, constituted the most striking feature of the entertainment, and long dwelt in the recollection of those who witnessed it.

XV.

HOW MR PITT TRIUMPHED OVER HIS OPPONENTS.

After-dinner speeches at grand civic entertainments had not yet come into fashion. Consequently the only healths drank on the present occasion were those already recorded.

The repast over, and grace said by the chaplain, their Majesties and the royal party immediately arose and proceeded to the council-chamber, where the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, with the sheriffs, the recorder, and some others, were in waiting to receive them.

The King was in high good humour, and called out in a cheerful tone to Sir Gresham, "A very sumptuous entertainment you have given us, my Lord Mayor—very sumptuous indeed! Always famous for hospitality in the City! Determined to keep up your charter, eh?"

"We try to do, sir," replied the Lord Mayor, bowing; "and it gratifies me exceedingly, and will, I am sure, gratify in an equal degree all those with whom I am associated, to learn that our efforts to please your Majesty and your gracious consort have been successful."

"Couldn't be better! couldn't be better!" cried the King. "Don't you think so, Charlotte, eh?" he added, to the Queen, who smilingly assented. "Must have cost a vast deal, though. Pity to waste so much on a single entertainment."

"Pardon me, sir. We cannot do too much to evince our gratitude for the honour and happiness conferred upon us by this visit. The City of London is rich, and can well afford what it has now done; but your Majesty may rest assured it would gladly expend ten times the amount to prove its unalterable attachment to your royal person, and its zeal for your government."

"Good—very good. I thank you sincerely, my Lord Mayor, and make no doubt your loyal sentiments are shared by all your fellow-citizens. In my turn let me say—and I beg you to repeat my words—that the scene I have just witnessed in your noble hall has made a profound and lasting impression upon me. Those enthusiastic demonstrations went to my heart. I trust they are not wholly unmerited. Since I have assumed the crown, it has ever been, and will ever continue to be, my aim to preserve inviolate the religion, the laws, and liberties of my people."

"Happy are your subjects in possessing such a ruler," replied the Lord Mayor. "I shall not fail to repeat the gracious expressions that have fallen from your Majesty's lips, and I well know from the feelings they excite in my own breast what will be their effect on others."

"Apropos of this grand entertainment," said the King. "Am I right in supposing that the expense of it is defrayed by the City, and not out of your lordship's private purse?"

"Your Majesty is quite right. The cost is borne by the City. On ordinary occasions the inaugural banquet is given jointly by the Lord Mayor for the time being and the sheriffs, and may be put down at three thousand pounds, of which the chief magistrate pays half."

"And enough too," rejoined the King, laughing. "I'm glad I'm not Lord Mayor. A year of these civic feasts would kill me; but they seem to agree with your lordship and your brother aldermen vastly well. To-morrow you begin your official duties I believe, and your time, no doubt, will be fully occupied. I wish you well through your term of mayoralty." He was running on in this way, when, seeing the Lady Mayoress standing near him, he turned to her, and said, "I was much concerned at the unpleasant predicament in which you were placed this morning, madam. Surely you must find that lofty head-dress very inconvenient, eh?"

"I don't mind inconvenience so long as I am in the fashion, sir," replied the Lady Mayoress. "But if your Majesty disapproves of my head-dress, I will never wear it again."

"Nay, that is a matter which concerns your husband more than it does me, madam," replied the King; "but I own I think you would look far better without it."

"Then I will sacrifice it without a moment's hesitation, sir," cried the Lady Mayoress.

"Nay, that would be carrying the matter too far," inter posed the Queen, good-humouredly; "does not your ladyship perceive that his Majesty is only jesting?"

"Faith, I am perfectly serious," rejoined the King; "and the next time I have the pleasure of seeing her ladyship in her chariot, I trust she will be able to look out of the window without risk to her head."

Whilst this conversation took place tea was served in the dainty little cups used at the time, and the room becoming gradually filled, the King moved into an inner apartment, attended by the Lord Mayor, the sheriffs, the aldermen of the committee, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Bute, Lord Melcomb, the Spanish ambassador, and the French plenipotentiary. Lord Temple and Mr Pitt followed, but held themselves a little aloof, until called forward by his Majesty.

The Queen, however, remained in the outer chamber, surrounded by the royal family and the lords and ladies in waiting. Somewhat removed from the royal circle were the aldermen not upon the committee, with their wives and daughters, and a few of the common-council. Of course Lady Dawes was present, and was speedily discovered by the Duke of York; and of course, when his Royal Highness addressed her, she had no longer an ear for Lord Sandwich. Her ladyship brought with her the three court beauties. Mrs Chatteris was also present, attended by Sir Francis Dashwood, Tom Potter, and Wilkes. Tradescant and Captain Chatteris formed part of the brilliant throng, but moved to another part of the room on the entrance of Herbert with Milly and Prue, followed by the Walworths.

If the young coxcombs could have read what was passing in the breasts of the two poor timid girls, they might not have been so displeased with them. It was only in obedience to Sir Gresham's express commands that Milly and Prue consented to be present at all, and most devoutly did they wish themselves anywhere else.

Very different was it with Alice Walworth. Enchanted with all that had hitherto come under her observation, she thought this the crowning event of the evening. To be surrounded by great people, and to be in the same room with their Majesties and the royal family—only a few yards from them, indeed—what could be more delightful? Mrs

Walworth was scarcely less elated, and the old hosier was in a state of perfect beatitude.

Herbert's self-possession did not desert him even now. Gazing around him with much curiosity, he scrutinized the features of the various important personages in his vicinity, and was particularly struck by the elegant figure and majestic deportment of Lord Bute, who previously to quitting the room with his Majesty had been standing beside the Princess-Dowager. Herbert was also greatly amused by the restless manner of the old Duke of Newcastle, and the ludicrously consequential air of the corpulent Lord Melcomb. But the stately figure and haughty countenance of the Great Commoner chiefly attracted his attention, and he could not remove his eyes from Mr Pitt so long as the latter remained in the room.

But let us now follow his Majesty. After some discourse with Bute and Melcomb, which appeared to irritate him, the King called to Pitt, and on the approach of the latter, said, in a sarcastic tone,

"I have to thank you, sir, for affording her Majesty and myself an opportunity of witnessing your triumphant entrance into the City to-day. The whole affair was exceedingly well managed, and does infinite credit to its contrivers. But I cannot help thinking that better taste would have been shown by all concerned, if the display had been reserved for some other occasion."

"That would not have answered the purpose, sir," observed Lord Bute. "The thing was got up to prove that no one enjoys so much popularity in the City as Mr Pitt."

"I should deserve this reprimand, sir, if I had been guilty of the presumption attributed to me," rejoined Pitt. "But so far from designing to make a triumphal entry into the City, I meant to come here incognito, and took every possible precaution to that end."

"Ay, ay, I remarked that you and Lord Temple rode in a chariot and pair," observed the King, dryly; "but that circumstance only made you more conspicuous. All the town knows you have sold your horses and disposed of your state-coach."

"Since Mr Pitt declares that he meant to come hither incognito, we are bound to believe him," observed Lord Bute, with a sneer; "but it is quite evident, whatever pains he may have taken to avoid detection, that his partisans had no difficulty in finding him out, and were fully prepared to give him welcome. To suppose he could entertain the preposterous notion of outvying your Majesty, would be to charge him with immeasurable arrogance and folly, but that he should have been the means—unintentional no doubt—of diverting the regards of many of your subjects from your royal person on an occasion like the present, is much to be regretted. I will say nothing at this moment of the insults I have had to endure at the hands of the mob—of the outrages heaped upon me for my devotion to your Majesty, and the favour you are graciously pleased to bestow upon me—of these I shall say nothing now—except to remark that it requires no great discernment to perceive that the frenzied demonstrations in behalf of Mr Pitt, and the outrageous and disgraceful attacks upon myself, emanate from the same source, and are, beyond question, the results of a deep-laid scheme—the object of which is apparent. But I am assured, sir, you will never yield to popular clamour, as I will never yield to the coercion of the mob. The opportunity has been seized of striking a blow at me, but the weapon will recoil on those who used it."

The last words were uttered with much acrimony, while the speaker glanced sternly and almost menacingly at the Lord Mayor.

"Unless I am mistaken, the latter observation made by your lordship was applied to me," observed Sir Gresham. "If so, I can merely say in reply, that the charge is wholly unfounded, and that no attack upon your lordship could originate with myself or with any of the City authorities. Let me add, that we are as jealous of our honour as your lordship can be of your own, and we repel the imputation with scorn. We are incapable of any underhand proceeding. We do no act of which we are ashamed. We speak our minds plainly—too plainly, perhaps—but still manfully and directly. If we assail an adversary, we meet him face to face. It is no fault of ours that you have learnt from the people's own lips their opinion of you. Some of us share that opinion, though we would have sought a fitter occasion for expressing it."

"My Lord Mayor," said the King, "this is strange language—"

"I humbly crave your pardon, sir, if I have been wanting in due respect, but my feelings carried me away. It is our attachment to your Majesty that makes me and my fellow-citizens desire that you may have a better adviser."

"And your zeal leads you to endeavour to impose one on me, eh?" demanded the King, coldly.

"Far from it, sir. We simply wish to see you freed from an influence which we deem inimical to your own interests and to those of your country."

"You said very truly that you are plain-spoken in the City."

"We are no courtiers, sir. But if blunt, we are honest, loyal, and dutiful."

"Loyal it may be," remarked Lord Bute; "but your notions of duty are somewhat peculiar."

"Enough!" cried the King, authoritatively. "This altercation is unseemly, and must cease."

But Pitt would not be silenced.

"I trust, sir," he said, "that you will allow me to vindicate myself from the charge of basely courting popularity, and using dishonourable weapons against a rival. That Lord Bute may feel humiliated is not unnatural, that he may nourish resentment against me is not surprising, but that he should venture to insinuate that I would stir up the mob against him, shows that he judges me by himself. It may not be agreeable to him to be made aware of his unpopularity, but he has not to seek far to discover the cause of it."

"These taunts are but part of the systematic annoyance I have this day endured," rejoined Bute. "But a time will come—and that speedily—when the people will estimate my conduct aright, and give me credit for anxiety to promote their welfare and prosperity. Peace is the greatest blessing that can be bestowed upon a nation long distracted by war, and I do not hesitate to say that I have counselled an honourable and advantageous peace to his Majesty, and that there is every prospect of his desires being accomplished. Had Mr Pitt's proposals been followed, we should now be at war with a power with whom we still happily retain friendly relations."

"But our exchequer would have been enriched by the treasures of the Spanish galleons," remarked Alderman Beckford

"Heaven be praised they are safe under the guns of Cadiz!" cried the Conde de Fuentes, with a glance of triumph. "Since allusion has been made to the court I have the honour to represent, I may be permitted to observe that the spirit of haughtiness which until lately characterized the British Cabinet, was most offensive to his Catholic Majesty. Conditions, advantageous and honourable to England, were disdainfully rejected by the minister who then held the reins of government, and propositions made to Spain to which she could not listen. Throughout his Catholic Majesty was influenced by pacific feelings, but he could not sacrifice his dignity."

"I am glad to find that our friendly relations with Spain are not likely to be disturbed," observed one of the sheriffs. "I had feared otherwise, since I understood that a positive and categorical demand had been made of his Catholic Majesty, as to whether he intended to ally himself with France against this country. Furthermore, I understood that on the answer to this question hung the issue of war."

"So it does," rejoined Bute; "but there is no fear of a rupture between the two powers. The Family Compact is a pure fiction."

At this remark, the Conde de Fuentes and the Duc de Nivernais exchanged a look, which did not escape Mr Pitt's notice.

"The secret treaty exists as surely as your lordship stands before me," said Pitt. "Ere long you will have full proof of the truth of my assertion. You have just heard from the best authority that the Spanish flota has reached Cadiz in safety; and I am enabled to add that an answer *has* come from the court of Madrid. A courier extraordinary arrived this very morning."

"Eh! what? what? A courier arrived this morning from Madrid;" exclaimed the King. "You must be mistaken, sir. I have heard of none."

"Neither have I," replied Bute, looking rather blank. "But perhaps Mr Pitt—since he knows so much—can tell us the nature of the response."

"You must apply for precise information to his excellency the Spanish ambassador," rejoined Pitt; "but, unless I greatly err, his Catholic Majesty peremptorily refuses to answer the inquiry."

"This man must be a wizard," observed Fuentes, in an under-tone, to the Duc de Nivernais. "No one but your excellency has seen the despatch."

"And I have certainly not disclosed its contents to him," replied the French plenipotentiary.

The King seemed almost startled by Pitt's reply, and looked at the Favourite, who shook his head incredulously.

"I must beg your excellency to contradict this unwarranted assertion," remarked Bute to Fuentes.

"Would I could do so," rejoined the latter, shrugging his shoulders. "How Mr Pitt has obtained the information I cannot tell. Unluckily, it is correct. Unwilling to disturb the harmony of this festive occasion, I did not design to acquaint your lordship with the determination of my court till to-morrow. But the announcement has been forced from me prematurely, as you perceive."

Master of himself as he was, Bute could scarcely conceal his mortification.

"Curses on it! we are checkmated," he muttered.

At first the King looked very angry, but quickly recovering himself, he said to the Duke of Newcastle in an authoritative tone, "Lord Bristol must be instantly recalled from Madrid—instantly, your grace."

"It shall be done, sir," replied the duke.

"You have been duped, my lord, and I have been trifled with," said the King in a low tone to Bute.

"The Spanish ambassador and the French plenipotentiary have played me false, sir," replied Bute.

"You did wrong to trust them, my lord—very wrong," replied the King. "They are a pair of arch hypocrites."

"It grieves me to announce that I am ordered to quit your Majesty's court and dominions forthwith," said Fuentes, bowing.

"Your excellency shall have your passport and credentials," replied the King, with great dignity.

"I must also crave your Majesty's permission to depart," said the Duc de Nivernais. "My mission to your court is at an end."

"Your excellency can depart when you please," rejoined the King. And turning coldly from him, he added, in a voice calculated to be heard by all the assembly, "War shall be declared at once against Spain."

"I am right glad to hear your Majesty say so," observed the Lord Mayor. "The proclamation will be hailed with satisfaction by all your subjects. But it is vexatious to think we have lost those rich Spanish galleons."

"I cannot sufficiently express my obligations to your lordship for the great consideration you have shown us," said the Conde de Fuentes to Bute.

"You have out-manœuvred me, that is certain," replied the chagrined Favourite.

"Those galleons undoubtedly are a great loss," remarked the King to Pitt. "Your information was correct. Had I followed your counsel all would have been well."

"That admission requites me for the disappointment I have experienced, sir," observed the Great Commoner.

"It is now clear there has been a cabal against you," continued his Majesty, in a low tone; "but I will quell it. Will you consent to act with Lord Bute?"

"It pains me to refuse any request of your Majesty," replied Pitt. "I will lay down my life to serve you, but I cannot act with him."

"Hum! I thought better of you. I did not suppose you capable of petty jealousy."

"I jealous of Bute!" exclaimed Pitt, in a half-scornful tone, his cheek flushing as he spoke. "Your Majesty does not know me. I will not act with his lordship, but he shall have no factious opposition from me. If his measures seem to me worthy of approval, I will warmly support them. This is no season for personal differences. A crisis like the present demands united action. All must work to one end. To bring the war on which your Majesty is about to engage to a glorious termination, to raise the power and renown of the nation, must be the aim of every true patriot and loyal subject—and it shall be mine."

And making a profound obeisance, he drew back.

As will naturally be supposed, the King's declaration of an immediate war with Spain had caused great excitement. Only those in the inner room heard the announcement, but they conveyed the intelligence to the persons in the outer apartment, and it soon became generally disseminated. The truth of the report was confirmed by the departure of the Conde de Fuentes and the Duc de Nivernais, both of whom took formal leave of his Majesty.

Throughout it all, gratifying as the incident must have been to his pride, no undue elation was discernible in the countenance of the Great Commoner.

But if Pitt was perfectly calm, it was more than could be said for his opponents. Lord Bute, the Duke of Newcastle, and the whole of the cabal who had intrigued against him, looked sorely discomfited.

On the other hand, Pitt's partisans did not attempt to conceal their exultation. Lord Temple and Alderman Beckford laughed together at the defeat of the Favourite and his coadjutors, and even the Lord Mayor chuckled.

"If the government should be able to carry on this war with Spain successfully," observed Beckford to Temple, "it will only be by adopting the plans they have striven to frustrate. It is well they didn't go too far."

"Would they had gone farther!" rejoined Temple. 'Tis a pity Bute should not have had rope enough to hang himself."

XVI.

HOW THE LORD MAYOR'S ELDER DAUGHTERS DANCED WITH THE YOUNG PRINCES; AND HOW HIS YOUNGEST DAUGHTER WAS PRESENTED TO THEIR MAJESTIES.

The situation was embarrassing to his Majesty, and, to put an end to it, he rejoined the Queen in the outer room.

Shortly afterwards the common hunt, who acted as master of the ceremonies, accompanied by the City marshal and two gentlemen of the Lord Mayor's household, entered to announce that all was prepared for the ball.

This information was a great relief to the King, and he expressed his desire that dancing should commence forthwith, calling out good-naturedly to the Queen,

"Come, Charlotte, the ball is about to begin. Though we don't dance, let us go and see the young folks enjoy themselves."

"With all my heart," replied the Queen, instantly rising.

On this the doors were thrown open, and the company respectfully drew back as the royal party passed out, preceded by the Lord Mayor. Close behind her Majesty followed the Lady Mayoress. The rest of the assemblage followed according to their degrees, but only a privileged few were admitted to the platform; the majority of the company proceeded by another passage to the body of the hall.

On their return to the hustings, the royal party were struck with surprise by the wonderful metamorphosis that had been effected in so short a space of time in the great hall; it being now converted into a magnificent ball-room, all the tables removed, and carpets stretched across the pavement. Accommodation could therefore be afforded to a vast assemblage; but, large as it was, the space was not greater than needed, for all the fair occupants of the galleries, eager to participate in the pleasures of the dance, began to descend to the area below, so that it soon became densely thronged.

But the platform itself was likewise changed in appearance. The royal canopy was left, but the state table, with its superb ornaments, had been taken away, a fresh carpet spread over the floor, and the stage cleared for dancing.

Amongst those allowed admission to this privileged place—in addition to the immediate attendants on their Majesties—were the aldermen of the committee and the Lord Mayor's family.

As soon as their Majesties had seated themselves beneath the canopy, the Duke of York advanced to Lady Dawes, who was standing with the Duchess of Richmond on the right of the stage, and, with a very graceful though ceremonious bow, claimed her hand for a minuet. Dropping a curtsey to the ground, her ladyship delightedly assented, and yielding him the points of her fingers, which he took respectfully within his own, they proceeded with slow and stately steps towards the centre of the platform, where his Royal Highness was joined by his brother, Prince William, who had gone through a like ceremony with Mrs Chatteris.

The music then struck up, and the graceful dance commenced, exciting universal admiration from the vast assemblage in the hall, who had nothing at present to do but to look on. No dance is so well calculated to display grace and elegance as the minuet. Why can it not be revived, and extinguish the everlasting waltz and outlandish polka?

A thousand eyes being fixed upon the present performers, it cannot be doubted they would do their best; and we may add they acquitted themselves to admiration. Every movement was noted, and when the dance was over, a buzz of approval ran through the hall. Of the two sisters, Lady Dawes was considered the most majestic, Mrs Chatteris the most graceful. The Lady Mayoress could not tell which pleased her most. She was enraptured with both. They were matches for princes, she thought, and, forgetful of the bar to any such exalted union, she fondly persuaded herself that her dearest Livy might become Duchess of York. "'Tis plain his Royal Highness is enamoured of her," she mentally ejaculated. And as Lady Dawes encountered the Duke's ardent glance, and felt the pressure of his hand, she was of the same opinion, though she did not carry her folly to quite such lengths as her mother.

At the conclusion of the performance her Majesty graciously observed to the Lady Mayoress that she had never seen the minuet better danced. The king likewise complimented the Lord Mayor upon the grace and beauty of his daughters, and inquired whether they constituted the whole of his family.

"No, sir, I have another daughter, and a son," replied Sir Gresham, bowing.

"Are they here, eh? Present them! present them!" cried his Majesty, quickly. "The Lord Mayor has another daughter, Charlotte."

"Indeed," replied the Queen. "If she resembles her sisters she must be very good-looking," she added to the Lady Mayoress.

"Your Majesty makes me exceedingly proud," said Lady Lorimer, "but I fear you will not think my youngest daughter quite equal to her sisters."

"Well, let us see her and judge, madam," said the King. "And your son;—what of him, eh?"

"Your Majesty will excuse a mother's partiality if I speak in his praise—but here he is," she added, as Sir Gresham approached with Tradescant, and presented him to their Majesties, by both of whom he was very graciously received.

"A good-looking young man enough," observed the

King, "but not exactly the sort of person I expected. He is not likely, I should think, to follow his father's business."

"I fear not, sir," replied Sir Gresham.

"Luckily he will not be obliged to do so, sir," said the Lady Mayoress.

"But where's your daughter?" cried the King to the Lord Mayor.

"She is excessively timid, sir," said Sir Gresham; "so timid, that she dares not approach your Majesty—I must entreat you to excuse her.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the King. "What is she afraid of? I shan't excuse her. Bring her at once."

Thus enjoined, Sir Gresham retired, and presently afterwards returned with Milly, looking very pale and frightened. The Queen's kind looks, however, reassured her, and the poor girl mustered up courage to press her lips to the hand graciously extended to her by her Majesty.

"Come here, my dear," said the King, saluting her; "you must overcome this timidity—borrow a little of your sisters' confidence. They can spare you some."

"Exactly what I say to her, sir;" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress. "I am constantly bidding her imitate her sisters."

"Take my advice, madam, and let her alone," said the King. "She is very well as she is, and can find her tongue on all fitting occasions, I make no doubt. I dare say your lordship is very well content with her," he added to Sir Gresham.

"I have every reason to be so, sir," replied the Lord Mayor; "and it is my earnest hope that she may retain her present simplicity of character."

"Quite right," said the King. "Well! have you nothing to say for yourself?" he added to Milly, with an encouraging smile.

The poor girl's heart was overflowing, but she was so confused that she could not give utterance to her feelings. At last she stammered out, "I shall never forget your Majesty's kindness and condescension to me, and if I cannot find words to express my gratitude, I trust you will forgive me."

And with a profound curtsey to both their Majesties, she retired with her father.

"A very nice girl, Charlotte," observed the King—"a very nice girl—but rather too timid."

In which opinion the Queen coincided.

While this was passing the Duke of York commanded a gavotte, and, changing partners with Prince William, they both resumed their places on the stage. Several young nobles joined them, and the music striking up, the sprightly dance commenced.

At the same time dancing began in the body of the hall, and was carried on as well as circumstances would permit, the crowd being too great to allow much room for display on the part of the performers. As soon as the gavotte was over, a rigadoon followed, then another minuet, and next a jig—all these succeeded each other so rapidly as to task the powers both of dancers and musicians.

Amongst those engaged in the jig were Herbert and Alice Walworth, and overheated and somewhat fatigued by their exertions, they quitted the crowded hall and repaired to an inner room, where they were informed by an attendant they would find refreshments. The room was rather full, and amongst the company were Tradescant, with Wilkes, Tom Potter, and some others of young Lorimer's fashionable acquaintances. These gay personages were drinking champagne, laughing, and making somewhat impertinent observations on those around them. Not caring to approach such a rakish set, Herbert led his partner to the farther end of the table, where they obtained ices and fruit. However, they did not escape observation, for Wilkes, chancing to espy Herbert, said to Tradescant, "Yonder is your new-found cousin, I perceive. A devilish pretty girl he has got with him. Who is she?"

"The daughter of a rich old hosier named Walworth, who dwells in St Mary-axe," replied Tradescant; "vulgar people with whom one don't care to associate, though my father chooses to notice them. The girl, however, is well enough, and is accounted a belle at the Mall in Moorfields—ha! ha!"

"She is uncommonly pretty," cried Tom Potter. "Introduce me to her, Lorimer. I'll ask her to dance."

"Nay, I claim the right of being first introduced to the little beauty," cried Wilkes. "I discovered her."

"Don't fight about her, pray!" rejoined Tradescant, laughing. "I'll introduce both of you, and then she can take her choice."

"That will be the best plan," said Tom Potter, "for then I am sure to be victorious."

"Don't be too confident, Tom," cried Wilkes. "Ten to one she gives me the preference."

"Done!" rejoined Potter. "Guineas. Now for it, Lorimer!"

With this the whole party, greatly diverted by the wager, proceeded to that part of the table where Herbert and Alice were standing. Making a low bow to the young lady, Tradescant begged permission to introduce his friends to her.

"Both are eager to dance with you, Miss Walworth," he said, "and neither will resign in favour of the other, so you must be pleased to make your own choice."

As Alice returned the salutations of the two gentlemen, she could scarcely help laughing at Wilkes's droll expression of countenance.

"Miss Walworth can't hesitate," said Tom Potter.

"She won't, I'm quite sure," rejoined Wilkes. "You rely on your good looks; I rely on my ugliness. She has just danced with a very handsome young fellow, so she will be glad to take me for a change. 'Twill be something to say you have had the ugliest man in town for a partner, Miss Walworth, so pray decide."

"Yes, yes, decide!" cried Tom Potter.

"Then I shall be very happy to dance with you, Mr Wilkes," said Alice, giving him her hand.

"Bravo!" cried the ill-favoured wit, triumphantly. "I knew I should win. I betted ten to one that you had as much discernment as beauty, Miss Walworth, and you have proved me to be right. You owe me a guinea, Mr Potter. Allons, mademoiselle, let us join the country-dance."

And he led her out of the room amid the laughter of his companions.

XVII.

HOW HERBERT LEARNT THAT TRADESCANT HAD GOT INTO THE HANDS OF SHARPERS; AND HOW MR CANDISH AGAIN APPEARED ON THE SCENE.

Annoyed by his cousin's supercilious manner towards him, and half disposed to resent it, Herbert made a stiff bow to the party, who replied to it with mock politeness, and was proceeding along the passage leading to the great hall, when he heard quick steps behind him, and, turning, perceived Tradescant.

"Stop a minute, sir," cried the latter; "I have a word to say to you."

"As many as you please," replied Herbert, halting.

"You cannot be unaware, sir, that your intrusion into our house this morning was exceedingly disagreeable to all the family, with the exception of my father and my youngest sister, and you will feel, therefore, that it is impossible there can be any intimacy with us. Excuse the hint I am compelled to give you, and be good enough to desist from further visits."

"If I consulted my own feelings, sir, you may rest assured I would never voluntarily expose myself to the repetition of such treatment as I experienced this morning from yourself and other members of your family," rejoined Herbert, coldly; "but I cannot act contrary to my uncle's injunctions, and since he has ordered me to come to him, I shall obey, however severely my patience may be tried."

"Oh! do as you please! I have cautioned you; and if you find the place too hot for you, don't blame me. I fancied, from your former tone, that you set up for a man of spirit, but you now appear tame enough."

"You shall not provoke me, cousin," said Herbert, with difficulty restraining himself. "I can have no quarrel with you."

"Make an end of this, sir," cried Tradescant, fiercely. "I forbid you to call me cousin. I disclaim all relationship with you."

"So long as your worthy father is good enough to acknowledge me as his nephew, I shall not heed being disowned by you," rejoined Herbert.

"I was right, I find, in setting you down as a mean-spirited fellow," said Tradescant. "I must try other means of rousing you."

"For your own sake forbear," cried Herbert, his eyes flashing as he caught Tradescant's uplifted hand. "This is no place for a brawl. Remember whose son you are, if you are determined to forget that I am your kinsman. If you continue in the same mood to-morrow I won't balk you."

"There is little likelihood of change on my part," rejoined Tradescant. "I give you credit for more prudence than I possess. Adieu, sir."

And he marched off, leaving Herbert, who had had enough to do to control himself, exceedingly chafed.

"I must calm myself," thought the young man. "If I join the assembly in my present state I shall be sure to quarrel with some one."

Descrying a chair placed amid some flowering shrubs, arranged in a recess on one side of the passage, he went in and took possession of the seat. He had not occupied it many minutes when he heard voices and laughter, and presently afterwards some gaily-attired young men, who were coming loiteringly along the passage, halted near the recess. Herbert instantly recognized them as Tradescant's fashionable friends, whom he had just seen in the refreshment-room; but they did not perceive him, as he was partially screened by the exotics. Not desiring to overhear their discourse, he would have coughed to make his presence known, if an allusion to his cousin had not caught his attention.

"Tradescant's ruin is certain," observed one of the speakers—it was Tom Potter; "he has got among a set of sharpers, who will fleece him of every shilling he possesses. I warned him against those two notorious rooks, Gleek and Bragge, but might have spared myself the trouble, for any good I could do. The pigeon *will* be plucked. How much does he owe you, Dashwood?"

"A few hundreds—I forget how much," replied Sir Francis.

"He owes me a thousand," observed Potter—"and

Wilkes nearly as much. I doubt whether we shall get the money. Tom Chatteris tells me his father-in-law is difficult to manage. Tom hopes, however, that the Lady Mayoress will be able to wheedle her spouse out of the money. Chatteris, as you know, is desperately in debt. Between son and son-in-law, the Lord Mayor will be pretty well drained."

"Tradescant will drain him dry without any other assistance," remarked Sir William Stanhope. "Who would have thought such a steady-going citizen would have a thorough-paced gamester for a son! If Tradescant, as you say, has got into the clutches of those arrant cheats Gleek and Bragge, his fate is sealed. But it will be a grievous blow to his father."

"Poh! what does that matter?" laughed Tom Potter. "If the Lord Mayor has to come down pretty handsomely for his son's imprudences, it needn't give us any concern."

And the party moved on, leaving Herbert aghast at the revelations they had unconsciously made to him.

What was to be done? In the present confusion of his mind he could not tell. All the speakers, who seemed to be perfectly acquainted with Tradescant's character, agreed that his ruin was inevitable. But might it not be averted? Was it too late to rescue him from the sharpers into whose hands he had fallen? These were questions Herbert could not, of course, answer. But he determined to make the attempt; and he also determined that, so far as he could prevent it, his uncle should not suffer from Tradescant's indiscretions.

Full of these laudable resolves, he emerged from the recess, and scarcely heeding where he was going, proceeded towards the inner courts instead of to the hall. He had not gone very far when a side-door opened, and a little old man, in a shabby suit of black, whom Herbert took for an attendant, came forth. This personage, on seeing Herbert, stared very hard at him, and at last said:

"May I make so bold as to ask your name, sir?"

Herbert told him how he was called.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the other. "Then you must be the Lord Mayor's nephew—the son of his elder brother, Godfrey."

"You are right," rejoined Herbert, staring at his interrogator in his turn. "But how do you know that?"

"You are very like your father, young man," rejoined the other, without heeding the question; "so like, that I knew you at once. I think I have heard that Godfrey Lorimer is no more?"

"Alas! it is so," replied Herbert. "But you seem to take a strange interest in me. Whence does it arise?"

"I take great interest in all that concerns the Lord Mayor," rejoined the old man. "I knew him as a boy, and I knew Godfrey at the same time. Don't be angry with me if I say that Gresham—the Lord Mayor, I mean—was the better of the two."

"Having proved the more successful in life, it may be inferred that his lordship has some good qualities that were wanting in my father," rejoined Herbert. "But there was another brother, Lawrence, whom perhaps you likewise knew."

"Yes, yes, I knew him," answered the old man, in a husky voice; "but he was a graceless fellow, not worth remembering. He ought not to be mentioned in the same breath as Gresham—I mean, the Lord Mayor."

"Perhaps you may be doing him an injustice," said Herbert. "But since you seem to possess so much information about my family, you can tell me in all probability if my uncle Lawrence is still alive, and where he may be met with?"

"I can't tell you anything about him," replied the old man, hurriedly. "When I last heard of him, he was in very bad circumstances, and shunned by all who had known him in better days."

"The very reason I must find him out. Where was he when you heard of him last?"

"I don't recollect."

"Try," cried Herbert, eagerly. "You seem to have some dislike to my poor uncle. You know more about him, I am convinced, than you choose to tell."

"I!" exclaimed the old man, uneasily. "Isn't it enough that I have told you he is miserably poor? What more would you have?"

"You shan't go till you have answered my inquiries," rejoined Herbert, catching hold of him.

"I can't answer them, I tell you," exclaimed the old man, trying to break away. "Ah! there's the beadle," he added, with a look of affright, as Staveley was seen approaching them.

"Don't let him go, sir—don't let him go!" cried Staveley, hurrying forward. "The Lord Mayor wants him. You escaped me this morning, Mr Candish, but you won't get off again in a hurry, I can promise you."

"What has he been doing?" demanded Herbert.

"Why, his first offence was getting drunk, and boasting of being the Lord Mayor's brother," replied Staveley. "His second offence was running away, and getting me into trouble."

"You've no right to detain me," cried Candish, almost fiercely, and struggling ineffectually to get free. "I've done nothing to deserve this treatment. I'll complain to the Lord Mayor."

"Just what I advise you to do," rejoined the beadle. "Why, I'm obeying his lordship's orders in detaining you. Behave yourself like a gen'l'man, and I'll treat you as such. You're the most wrong-headed, obstinate old man I ever had the misfortune to meet with. Keep quiet, will you?"

A light seemed suddenly to break upon Herbert, and he mentally ejaculated, "Is it possible this miserable creature can be my uncle Lawrence? Everything seems to lead to such a conclusion, and yet—"

"Listen to me, Herbert Lorimer," said the old man, in a totally different tone from that he had hitherto assumed. "You will understand, without necessity for further explanation on my part, why it is desirable the Lord Mayor should not see me again. It was highly imprudent in me to return, but an uncontrollable impulse dragged me here. I wished to have one more look at—at the Lord Mayor. It would have been my last."

There was something so strangely significant in the tone in which the latter words were uttered, that both his hearers were impressed with the notion that the old man meditated some desperate act.

"The old fellow looks as if he meant to make away with hisself," whispered the beadle to Herbert. "It wouldn't be safe to let him go."

"I am quite of your opinion," replied Herbert. "Take care of him, but on no account treat him harshly, while I ascertain the Lord Mayor's wishes respecting him."

"Oh! Herbert, what folly are you about to commit!" exclaimed Candish. "If you have any feeling for the Lord Mayor, for me, for yourself, you will cause my immediate liberation."

"But he can't do it, I tell you," rejoined the beadle. "I don't mean to let you go without the Lord Mayor's orders. Your obstinacy is enough to provoke a saint. Keep quiet, I say."

"You shall learn his lordship's wishes directly," cried Herbert, hurrying away.

XVIII.

HOW CANDISH WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING.

Almost at the precise juncture that the foregoing incident occurred, the King had been made acquainted with the strange meeting that took place earlier in the day between the Lord Mayor and his supposed brother. Some particulars of the occurrence had reached the ears of Sir Felix Bland, who could not help repeating them to Lord Melcomb, and he, in his turn, delighted at an opportunity of mortifying the Lord Mayor, lost no time in communicating them to the King.

"A singular circumstance occurred here this morning, sir," observed his lordship. "It may amuse your Majesty to hear it. A man was locked up in the Little Ease—a cell adjacent to the chamberlain's court, in which refractory apprentices are sometimes confined—but when the matter came to the Lord Mayor's ears, with his usual goodness he immediately ordered the poor fellow's release. Imagine, however, his lordship's surprise—his utter amazement—when in the unfortunate prisoner he recognized—a long-lost brother. Yes, sir, a brother! His lordship will correct me if I am wrong, but this is what I have heard."

"Eh? what?" cried the King. "The Lord Mayor's brother a prisoner in the Little Ease?"

"Permit me to explain the matter, sir," said Sir Gresham, stepping forward.

"I hope I have not mentioned anything in the slightest degree disagreeable to your lordship," said Lord Melcomb, with a hypocritical look.

"I quite appreciate your lordship's motives," replied Sir Gresham. "I have no wish to conceal anything from your Majesty," he pursued. "I do not blush to avow that I spring from a very humble origin. I by no means undervalue good birth, but I think good conduct ennobles a man quite as much as a good pedigree. Lord Melcomb, I am persuaded, will agree with me." This covert allusion to his want of birth made the Carlisle apothecary's son become redder than before. Without pausing, however, the Lord Mayor went on: "My father, an obscure tradesman—strictly honest—but unfortunate, had three sons, whom he brought up as well as his limited means would allow. The course of my brothers was different from mine, and led them into other paths. When I commenced life, and became actively engaged in business, they both quitted London, and I saw nothing more of them—neither did I hear from them. No misunderstanding having occurred between us, I could only account for their long-continued silence by the supposition that both must be dead. More than forty years elapsed without my learning aught about either of them until to-day."

"Ah! now we have it," cried Lord Melcomb.

The Lady Mayoress, who was in an agony at this narration, darted an imploring look at her husband, but without effect. He went on:

"This morning, sir, two young persons presented themselves at my house, and claimed relationship with me as children of my elder brother. I bade them heartily welcome, and am glad to have a nephew and niece here to-night whom I did not expect."

"Did your amiable relatives bring their father with them?" inquired Lord Melcomb.

"Their father is dead," replied the Lord Mayor, "and on me devolves their future care."

"Then this occurrence has nothing to do with the prisoner in the Little Ease?" said Lord Melcomb.

"If your lordship will permit me to proceed, you will learn. The incident you have detailed to his Majesty is substantially correct. I accidentally discovered that a man was shut up in that cell, and ordered his immediate release. To my infinite surprise and concern I found—"

"For Heaven's sake say no more," implored the Lady Mayoress, who had drawn near to him. "Respect my feelings, if you have no respect for yourself."

"Well! well!" cried the King, quickly. "What did you find, eh?"

"In the unfortunate individual who stood before me, I recognized my second brother, Lawrence, sir," replied the Lord Mayor. "It was a great shock to me at first, but I soon got over it, and offered him my hand. But from a feeling for which I can easily account, the poor fellow could not be brought to admit his relationship to me."

"Not admit it, eh?" exclaimed the King. "Then perhaps you may have been mistaken in him after all."

"I do not think so, sir," said the Lord Mayor. "However, it is curious that my poor brother—if it was he—should be lost again almost as soon as found, for though I left him here with every recommendation for his comfort, expecting to find him on my return from Westminster, he has disappeared, and what is more provoking, I have no clue to his abode."

"A good riddance!" muttered the Lady Mayoress.

"Your lordship may make yourself perfectly easy on that score," said the officious Sir Felix Bland, stepping forward. "Your nephew has just begged me to acquaint you that the individual about whom your lordship was inquiring on your return from Westminster has been found. Staveley has detained him, and awaits your lordship's instructions respecting him."

"What, is the man here?" cried the King. "I should like to see him."

"Nothing more easy, sir," replied Sir Felix, bowing. "Will it please your Majesty to have him brought before you?"

"How say you, my lord?" cried the King to the Lord Mayor. "Have you any objection?"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, in a whisper to her husband. "Make any excuse rather than submit to this indignity. I shall die if the wretch is brought in."

"My proposal, I see, is not agreeable to the Lady Mayoress," observed the King, "so I won't urge it. Still I should like to see the man, and question him. You have raised my curiosity."

"Your Majesty has only to signify your pleasure to be obeyed," said Sir Gresham.

The King hesitated for a moment, but, casting a glance at the Lady Mayoress, her agonized looks moved his compassion, and he had not the heart to persist.

"There will be a scene if I have him here," he mentally ejaculated. "I'll see him in private," he added, rising. "Let him be brought to the room where we took tea. I'll go there with the Lord Mayor."

"Your Majesty's injunctions shall be obeyed," replied Sir Felix. And with a lowly obeisance he hastened away.

"I trust I may be permitted to attend your Majesty," observed Lord Melcomb. "I should like to hear the dénouement of this strange adventure."

"Ask the Lord Mayor," rejoined the King. "If he allows it, you may come."

"I should be truly sorry Lord Melcomb should not be present, sir, since his lordship has taken such an obliging interest in the affair," observed Sir Gresham.

Attended only by the Lord Mayor and Lord Melcomb, his Majesty quitted the platform, and proceeded to the council-chamber. On entering the room Sir Gresham gave directions to the ushers stationed at the door that no one except Sir Felix Bland and the persons with him should be admitted.

His Majesty had scarcely taken his seat when the little alderman made his appearance, followed by Herbert and Candish. The old man trembled in every limb, and clung to his companion's arm for support.

"Take care what you are about, my dear sir," whispered Sir Felix. "You are in the King's presence. Make an obeisance, my dear sir, as low as you can."

"Oh, Heavens! Am I in a dream?" cried Candish. "My head swims, my senses desert me! Sustain me, Herbert, or I shall drop."

"Don't be afraid, brother," said the Lord Mayor, in an encouraging tone. "His Majesty has heard what took place this morning, and has graciously expressed a desire to see you."

"His Majesty is all goodness, and neglects not the meanest of his subjects—of that I am aware," rejoined Candish. "But, sensible as I am of his beneficence and condescension, I do not deserve that he should take any interest in me."

"Listen to me, Lawrence," said the Lord Mayor. "The singular circumstances of our meeting this morning have excited his Majesty's curiosity about you. Answer any questions he may deign to put frankly, and without reserve. Keep back nothing on my account, I beg of you."

"I am ready to answer his Majesty's interrogations," replied Candish; "but I think my wits must be clean gone, for I can scarce recollect what occurred this morning, except that your lordship mistook me for a long-lost brother."

"Then you maintain that you are not the Lord Mayor's brother?" said the King.

"Heaven save your Majesty—not I!" exclaimed Candish. "It would be a disgrace to his lordship to be connected with one like me."

"A truce to this, Lawrence," said Sir Gresham, angrily. "Speak the truth, man."

"What account do you give of yourself?" cried the King. "Who are you, eh?"

"I am named Hugh Candish, please your Majesty, and in the course of a long, and I may add, miserable life, have followed many occupations, but in none have I been successful. Misfortune has always tracked me, and if prosperity has smiled on me for a short time, it was sure to be followed by heavier calamity. How different has my career been from that of the Lord Mayor. We were boys together, and at that time my prospects were quite as good as his own, if not better. In him your Majesty beholds the result of industry, perseverance, and integrity. In me, the lamentable consequences of want of steadiness, though not want of probity, for throughout all my struggles I have maintained an unblemished character."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the King. "But where has your life been passed—in London, eh?"

"No, sir, in different places," replied Candish. "I have been abroad for several years, and have dwelt in many cities—Paris, Rome, Naples, Madrid. On my return to my own country, I dwelt for some time at Bristol, and have only returned to London within these few months."

"What occupation do you follow, eh?" demanded the King.

"I blush to own it, sir, but I was last engaged at Shuter's booth in Bartholomew Fair."

"Not as a jack-pudding, or a droll, I should imagine?" observed Lord Melcomb.

"It matters little what I played," replied Candish. "I felt degraded, but I had no alternative except starvation."

"Why did you not apply to me?" said the Lord Mayor, in a tone of reproach. "But never mind. The worst is past, Lawrence. The rest of your days shall be spent in comfort."

"Again I thank your lordship from the bottom of my heart for your benevolent intentions towards me," replied the old man; "but I cannot accept them."

"Not accept them! eh!—why not?" cried the King. "Are you too proud to be indebted to your own brother?"

"Pride has long been a stranger to my breast, sir," replied Candish with an expression of deep humility; "but I cannot allow the Lord Mayor to be misled by his feelings."

"Then you mean to persist in your disclaimer of relationship to him, eh?" said the King.

"I am obliged to do, sir."

"And you, my lord, what say you? Have you altered your opinion, eh?"

"No, sir, not in the least," replied the Lord Mayor. "I am convinced that he is my brother Lawrence. He partly admitted the fact himself. He said he knew me as a boy, yet I remember no person named Candish."

"My name may have slipped from your lordship's memory. Very like. Yet still I was your playmate and friend, and could mention many little circumstances which would bring me to your recollection."

"Not as Hugh Candish, but as Lorry Lorimer."

"Well, if your lordship *will* have it so, I must yield," replied the old man; "but I protest against the inference you draw."

"Have I leave to speak, my lord?" interposed Herbert; and obtaining the Lord Mayor's assent, he went on. "When Mr Candish, as he chooses to call himself, first addressed me, he said he recognized me from the likeness to my father, while other observations which he let fall brought me to the same conclusion as your lordship—namely, that he is my uncle Lawrence."

"Is this your nephew?" inquired the King of Sir Gresham; and receiving an answer in the affirmative, he added, "A fine young man. I like his looks."

"I think your Majesty will only waste time in pursuing this inquiry further," observed Lord Melcomb. "Apparently, no pressing will induce this Bartholomew Fair actor to make a confession. It is very droll, certainly. If the Lord Mayor had disclaimed the connexion it would not have been surprising, but that the other should do so is extraordinary."

"I agree with your lordship," said the King. "It would be idle to pursue the inquiry further now. When you have fully investigated the matter," he added to the Lord Mayor, "and satisfied yourself one way or the other, let me know the result: though I have little doubt in my own mind that you are in the right."

"To-morrow I shall be able to unravel the mystery," replied Sir Gresham, "and will not fail to communicate the solution to your Majesty. Do me the favour, Sir Felix, to cause Mr Candish to be taken to my house in Cheapside—but mind! he must not be lost sight of."

"Your lordship need be under no apprehension," said Candish. "I shall not attempt to escape again."

"You are not to be trusted, brother," rejoined the Lord Mayor, with a pitying smile, "and must forgive me if I am compelled to put some little constraint upon your movements. We will talk the matter over quietly to-morrow, and then I feel sure we shall come to a right understanding."

"Unless your brother—if brother he be—has taken leave of his senses, you cannot fail to do so," rejoined the King. "He can have no possible motive for further concealment.

Not one man in a thousand, I verily believe, would have acted as your lordship has done. Your conduct is noble."

On this his Majesty quitted the council-chamber, and attended by the Lord Mayor and Lord Melcomb, returned to the hustings, and resuming his seat beside the Queen, recounted to her all that had occurred during his absence. The tone in which he spoke was so loud, that the Lady Mayoress, who was standing near, lost not a syllable he uttered, and resolved, in the bitterness of her heart, that her first business should be to turn the old Bartholomew Fair actor out of the house.

XIX.

OF THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE WALWORTH FROM THE BALL.

Anxious to see the Lord Mayor's directions respecting Candish fully carried out, Herbert did not lose sight of the latter until he had been taken off to Cheapside in charge of Staveley. This done, the young man felt himself at liberty to follow his own devices, and his first impulse was to look for Alice Walworth. His quest, however, was vain. The crowd was still as great as ever in the hall, and it was next to impossible to discover any particular person amidst such a throng. So at last he gave up the attempt, and stationed himself near the steps leading to the inner court, thinking it possible he might catch a glimpse of her. But though he remained there nearly an hour, during which time a multitude of charming-looking girls, attended by their partners, passed and repassed, Alice was not among them. His patience at last becoming exhausted, he moved off towards the refreshment-room, and had nearly reached it, when he heard himself called, and turning, perceived Mr and Mrs Walworth. To his great disappointment, however, their daughter was not with them.

"Oh, Mr Herbert, we're so glad to see you!" cried Mrs Walworth, coming up. "We've been looking for you everywhere. But where's Alice? What have you done with her?"

"Hasn't she been with you, madam?" exclaimed Herbert, surprised. "I've not seen her since she went to dance with Mr Wilkes—but that is nearly two hours ago. I concluded she would go back to you."

"We have seen nothing of her at all, and should have been extremely uneasy, of course, if we hadn't made sure she was with you, Mr Herbert," rejoined the lady. "Where can she be?"

"Nay, I'm sure I can't pretend to tell, my dear," responded Mr Walworth. "As well look for a needle in a bottle of hay as attempt to find her amongst the crowd in the great hall. Plague take the girl! what a deal of trouble she does give one!"

"But she must be found, Mr Walworth, she must be found."

"Certainly, my dear, she *shall* be found. But be good enough to explain *how* it is to be done. Perhaps Mr Herbert will help us?"

"Oh, do, there's a dear, kind creature," cried Mrs Walworth. "I'm getting so miserably anxious."

"I'll do my best, madam," Herbert replied; "but don't make yourself uneasy. No doubt she'll appear presently."

"No doubt she will," replied Mr Walworth. "Let us sit down in the refreshment-room and wait for her there. She'll find us out, I promise you."

"I wonder you can take it so easily, Mr Walworth. Something has happened to her, I'm convinced."

"How needlessly you distress yourself, my love. What *can* have happened to her?"

"I can't tell, I'm sure, but I'm growing terribly alarmed."

"Ah! here comes Mr Wilkes," cried Herbert, perceiving the personage in question coming along the passage with several of his gay companions, "he may be able to give us some information respecting her. I'll see."

And hurrying towards Wilkes, he addressed his inquiries to him.

"What! is Miss Walworth lost?" cried Wilkes, laughing. "You don't suppose she has eloped, eh?"

"I cannot allow any jesting at the young lady's expense, sir," rejoined Herbert. "Where is she? She was committed to your care, and you are, therefore, responsible for her."

"The deuce I am!" cried Wilkes. "I would have you to know, sir, that I hold myself responsible for no woman, young or old. A good joke it would be if a man must answer for his partner in a dance, as if she were his partner for life. You have chosen to question me so impertinently that I feel disinclined to reply to you at all, but in compassion for your ignorance, I will say that I know nothing about Miss Walworth. When she had done with me, she engaged herself to dance with some one else."

"Who was it, sir? I insist upon knowing. Come with me, and point him out."

"And do you really imagine, my agreeable young friend, that I shall accompany you on such an errand?" returned Wilkes, with a sneer.

"I have not the least doubt of it, sir," rejoined Herbert, in a stern tone.

"Aha!" cried Wilkes. "You will have something to amuse you presently, gentlemen," he added, turning to his companions.

Happily, however, the dispute was cut short by Mrs Walworth, who rushed up, imploring Wilkes to tell her what had become of her daughter.

"Really, madam, I am very sorry," he replied; "I can only tell you, as I have just told this impetuous young man, that your daughter left me to dance with some one else, with whom I was totally unacquainted, and whom I should not know again were I to meet him. That is the sum of my information, madam. I must beg of you to excuse me. If Mr Herbert Lorimer has any further communication to make to me he will easily learn where I am to be found." So saying, he made her a low bow, and marched off with his companions.

After this, Herbert instituted another search in the hall, but with no better success than before. He then mounted to the galleries and looked down amongst the crowd, but failed to discern Alice. As time wore on, Mrs Walworth's uneasiness increased, and even the old hosier became alarmed. Sir Felix Bland, with some of the committee of aldermen, aided in the search, and it soon became apparent that Alice was gone. But where, or how, no one could tell. Wilkes was again sought for, but by this time he had gone too. After a long and fruitless search, Mr and Mrs Walworth were obliged to give up the matter in despair, and went home in a state bordering on distraction.

Long before this, the King, who always kept early hours, had departed. Their Majesties were ceremoniously ushered to their carriage by the Lord Mayor, with the sword of state borne before him, by the sheriffs, and the aldermen composing the committee. On taking leave, the King warmly expressed his acknowledgments to Sir Gresham, adding emphatically, "I shall never forget your generous conduct to your poor brother."

Guildhall-yard was one blaze of light, all the lamps with which the surrounding buildings were covered being illuminated. Loud cheers were raised as the royal carriage drove away, escorted by a troop of Horse Guards.

The whole of the houses in New King-street and Cheapside were brilliantly illuminated—as indeed were those in every street through which the royal party had to pass on their return to St James's. On many of the habitations were displayed large transparencies and loyal devices.

In consequence of these illuminations, which were exceedingly beautiful, especially in the City—and seen to great advantage, the night being singularly calm and fine—the streets were almost as crowded as during the day; and though no doubt there were a good many persons who could not be complimented upon their sobriety, the behaviour of the majority of the concourse was orderly, and nothing occurred to dissatisfy their Majesties with their visit to the City. The trainbands still lined the streets as far as Temple-bar, though many of them, owing to the plentiful libations in which they had indulged, could scarcely preserve their equilibrium, and reeled off as soon as the royal carriage had passed by.

Shortly after their Majesties' departure the rest of the royal family quitted Guildhall—though some little delay was experienced in getting up their carriages. On parting with her, the Duke of York said many gallant things to Lady Dawes, and carried off her fan as a souvenir, leaving her perfectly enchanted by his attentions.

Determined not to expose himself to a repetition of the annoyances he had undergone, Lord Bute returned in a sedan-chair, and luckily escaped discovery, or he might have fared still worse than in the morning. Lord Melcomb adopted a similar mode of conveyance.

Mr Pitt went back with Lord Temple, and hoped to escape detection, but being speedily recognized, the crowd surrounded his carriage as before, and shouted so vociferously that they roused many decent citizens from their slumbers; and these worthy folk, on ascertaining the cause of the uproar, threw open their windows, and waving their long cotton nightcaps, cheered lustily in concert with the throng below.

Thus was the Great Commoner's return as triumphant as his entry into the City.

The festivities in Guildhall were kept up for several hours longer, and it was past four o'clock before the entertainment was brought to a close. Sir Gresham, however, did not see it out. After the departure of Mr Pitt and Lord Temple he retired with the Lady Mayoress, and having ascertained that his supposed brother was safe and well cared for, sought repose after the fatigues and excitement of his first day of mayoralty.

End of the First Book.

BOOK II.

THE CITY MALL.

I.

OLD "BOW BELLS."

Just as Bow Church clock struck nine on the morning after Lord Mayor's Day, an elderly personage, wrapped in a dark-brown cloak, which had evidently seen long service, and with mouth and throat protected by a shawl, entered the large draper's shop which called Sir Gresham Lorimer master, and pausing for a moment to cleanse his shoes on a mat near the door, cast an inquisitive glance around. Owing to the careful manner in which they were muffled up, little of the features of this individual could be discerned, except a prominent nose and eyes provided with spectacles, but the shopmen and apprentices had no difficulty in recognizing him, even as he passed the shop window, and calling out to each other that "Old Bow Bells was coming," instantly ceased laughing and chatting, and some of the younger of them, vaulting over the counter, put on a very demure and business-like expression of countenance.

The person of whom these gentry stood so much in awe was Sir Gresham's manager, Tobias Crutchet—an old and much-trusted servant, who had lived in the establishment—in one capacity or other—for nearly fifty years. He had acquired the nickname just applied to him by the shopmen in consequence of making it a boast that he had never been, and never desired to be, beyond the sound of Bow Bells. The designation stuck; and Mr Crutchet was known throughout Cheapside, on 'Change, at Lloyd's, and Garraway's, and at the quiet tavern where he smoked a pipe and drank a single glass of punch at night, as "Old Bow Bells."

A few words must be devoted to this worthy fellow's history. At the time that our Lord Mayor was apprenticed to his future father-in-law, Mr Tradescant, Tobias Crutchet was a porter in the house, and though a very young man then, was capable of giving advice and setting a good example to those about him, and Sir Gresham always declared that he mainly owed his rise to honest Toby Crutchet's precepts. As young Lorimer got on, we may be sure his humble friend was not neglected. Toby Crutchet very soon had a place behind the counter, and was gradually promoted —with a constantly increasing salary—until he became foreman and manager. In fact, Sir Gresham would have taken him into partnership, but Crutchet gratefully declined the offer, being perfectly content with his position, which was far better than in former days he could have hoped to obtain. Moreover, he was unmarried, and had no relatives to provide for. Bound as he was by ties of strongest gratitude to his master, old Crutchet was equally attached to the rest of the family. He had known the Lady Mayoress, now expanded into a dame of such goodly proportions, as a pretty, lightsome girl, and had often borne her in his arms to church on a wet Sunday, and brought her home in the same way from a neighbour's house. Naturally, little Celia Tradescant was very fond of Toby Crutchet, for the obliging fellow did whatever she asked him. But when, some years afterwards, a certain marriage took place, Crutchet was nearly as proud and happy as the bridegroom himself. It was positive rapture to him to behold the young couple standing before the altar at Bow Church, and to see Mr Tradescant give away his daughter. His next gratification was the christening of Olivia, at whose marriage with Sir John Dawes he assisted, some five-and-twenty years later. All his master's children were dear to him as his own offspring could have been, but his favourite was decidedly Tradescant. Though the boy was a sad pickle, Toby Crutchet was ever ready to overlook his faults, and if possible screen him from blame or punishment, fondly persuading himself he would grow steadier in time, and become an exemplary character like his father. Even when Tradescant began to plunge into dissipation and extravagance, the old man, who was more fully aware of the extent of the youth's follies than Sir Gresham himself, would not give him up. Actuated by the same mistaken feelings that had influenced his conduct towards his favourite in earlier days, he now strove to conceal Tradescant's proceedings from his father. Whenever the young prodigal was in difficulties he applied to Crutchet for assistance, and never in vain. The old man's savings were as freely lent as unscrupulously borrowed.

Unaccustomed to refusal, and regarding Crutchet as an inexhaustible source of supply, Tradescant was surprised and provoked when the old man—only a few days before the commencement of our story—for the first time declined to let him have the considerable sum he required, or any part of it. The only reason he assigned for the refusal was one which Tradescant did not credit—namely, that it was not in his power to make further advances. So the young spendthrift railed at him very heartily, calling him a stingy old curmudgeon and a skinflint, and went away in a tremendous huff. The denial effaced all sense of gratitude for former favours from Tradescant's breast—if, indeed he had ever felt grateful—and he now only regarded his assistant as an avaricious old hunks.

But Crutchet was deeply grieved—not by the abuse heaped upon him—for this he cared little—but by the utter recklessness exhibited by the young man. Yet while reproaching himself that he had not long ago acquainted Sir Gresham with his son's misconduct, he could not even now make up his mind to open his master's eyes.

Methodical in all his habits, Crutchet always entered the shop as Bow Church clock struck nine, and had not been known to vary for years. Originally a tall and strongly built man, he was now somewhat shrunk and bent, as might well be, seeing he was upwards of threescore and ten, but he still looked robust, and might hope to hear the chimes of his darling bells for several years to come. When he took off his shawl and cloak he exhibited rather a gaunt person, arrayed in an old-fashioned snuff-coloured coat, with immense pockets and plated buttons, waistcoat and breeches of the same material, buckles at the knees, brown woollen hose, and square-toed shoes, with high quarters and large silver buckles. He was a dark-complexioned man, and wore his own iron-grey hair combed back from the forehead and tied behind in a queue. Spectacles, a hat shaped like a tin flour-scale, and a long cravat dangling down in front, completed his costume.

After glancing round the shop to see that all was in its place, and asking a few questions of the shopmen, Crutchet marched into the counting-house, and gravely saluting the book-keepers, seated himself on a high stool, and opened a ledger.

While he was thus occupied, a note was brought him from the private part of the house by Tradescant's valet. It merely contained the words, "I must see you immediately." Crutchet heaved a sigh as he read the message, feeling that some fresh trouble was impending.

"Is your master up yet, Tiplady?" he inquired of the valet.

"No, sir; his honour is still a-bed," replied the man—almost as much of a coxcomb as his master—"but he begs you will come to him as soon as you can."

"I will wait on him immediately," replied Crutchet.

On this Tiplady departed, strutting consequentially through the shop, and winking to some of the apprentices, who made comical gestures to him in reply. Crutchet remained for a few minutes in deep thought, debating within himself what he ought to do, but unable to arrive at any positive conclusion. He then closed the ledger, and unlocked a door at the back of the room, which admitted him into the private house. Avoiding the principal passage, which was environed by a multitude of the Lord Mayor's servants, he mounted a back staircase, and soon reached the second-floor, where Tradescant's room was situated. Tiplady was standing at the door, and at once admitted him.

II.

A MATRIMONIAL PROJECT.

Tradescant's chamber was spacious, luxuriously fitted up, and so arranged as to serve the purposes both of bed-room and morning-room. At the farther end, on a superb French bed, with a rose-coloured canopy and curtains, and supported by large downy pillows edged with lace, lay the young prodigal. Near the couch stood a large Japan screen. But notwithstanding the richness of the furniture and decorations, great disorder reigned within the room. Thus a pink silk domino and mask, tossed upon a sofa by their wearer on his return from a masquerade, had not been since removed. Articles of attire in velvet and silk of the gayest colours were lying scattered about near the open wardrobes, and so were rich Mechlin shirts and cravats. Half a dozen perukes appeared to have been tried, and for some fault or other cast aside. In one corner was a collection of gold-headed canes and walking-sticks; in another a pile of swords, several of them with handsome handles. Here there was a dressing-table, with all its appliances in crystal and chased silver. Beside it was a large cheval-glass, wherein our young beau could survey his fine figure from head to foot. On the chimney-piece was a magnificent Louis Quinze clock, and on the other side of it stood some exquisite specimens of Sèvres china, while on the right and left of the hearth were two great green porcelain jars. The walls were covered with portraits of popular actresses—Mrs Yates, Mrs Clive, Mrs Bellamy, Mrs Abegg, and Miss Macklin—intermingled with pictures of opera figurantes, prize-fighters, cock-fights, and famous race-horses.

"Good morning, Bow Bells," Tradescant cried, as the old man entered the room. "Glad to see you. Bring a chair this way, and sit down."

Crutchet complied, and, gazing earnestly at the young prodigal, said,

"I am here at your bidding, Mr Tradescant. But I hope, sir, you haven't sent for me in the expectation of getting money."

"Indeed but I have, Bow Bells. Without a good round sum I shan't be able to get on, and I don't know who else to apply to but you. Cash I must have, but I would rather not apply to the Jews."

"Oh no, sir! That mustn't be thought of," cried Crutchet, shaking his head.

"I've been devilish unlucky of late," pursued Tradescant. "Cards and dice have been always against me. Since I spoke to you last, I haven't won a guinea."

"But how many have you lost, sir? May I venture to ask that?"

"Here, take this, and you'll see," rejoined Tradescant, tossing his tablets to him. "Look at the last page."

Crutchet turned to the page intimated, and was so horrified by what he saw that he could not repress a groan.

"Heaven preserve us!" he ejaculated. "Here's a total of five thousand pounds and upwards."

"Ay,, that's about it, Bow Bells," rejoined the young man. "Don't look so confounded glum; that won't mend the matter. You must get me out of this scrape, as you've done out of others before it. If I don't pay my debts of honour I shall be scouted—that you know as well as I do. Fortune has frowned upon me of late, but I am certain my luck will change to-day, and that I shall win."

"Oh, don't go on in this way, my dear young gentleman; for your good father's sake—for your own sake—don't!"

"But I *must* retrieve my losses," rejoined Tradescant, wholly unmoved by the appeal. "To-day I am sure to win, I tell you, and then I'll repay you all you've lent me, worthy Bow Bells—principal and interest."

"I want neither principal nor interest, sir. But oh! let me entreat you, as you value your reputation, to forswear cards and dice in future."

"I'll *never* leave off a loser, Bow Bells," replied Tradescant.

"But if you never win, sir—how then?"

"I tell you I *shall* win. So cease preaching, and come to the point. Will you let me have the money? I know you can."

"Indeed, sir, I have not the power."

"Poh! this is a mere idle excuse, and won't pass with me. Say you *won't*, and then I'll believe you."

"There is no lack of inclination on my part, I assure you, sir. All I ever possessed I owe to your good father. My poor services have been far overpaid by him. Therefore you have been welcome—heartily welcome—to all my savings. If I had aught left you should have it for the asking, though I deeply regret to see money so misapplied. But I have nothing—literally and truly nothing."

"Zounds! you don't mean to say this is really the case, Bow Bells?" cried the young man, looking fixedly at him.

"Alas! sir, it is too true. But in telling you this, I do not mean to convey any reproach. I am compelled to state the fact in order to prove my inability to help you. But oh! Mr Tradescant, give ear, I beseech you, to the counsels of an old man who loves you dearly as a son, and would make any sacrifice for you. You are blest with one of the best and kindest of fathers. Pause in your fatal career. Do not bring shame and sorrow upon him—do not—do not!"

"Did I not know you mean well I should be very angry with you, Mr Crutchet," rejoined Tradescant, haughtily. "But in consideration of your motives, I forgive you. No more sermonizing, however. I haven't patience for it.

"I trust you will never wring your father's heart as you do mine, sir," groaned the old man.

"Why, what the deuce would you have me do, you stupid old Bow Bells? I can't stop now if I would. I must pay my debts, I suppose. How much do I owe you?"

"Never mind me, sir—never mind me."

"Well, you can wait, certainly. But the others won't. So the rhino must be had somehow. Harkye, Bow Bells! will you borrow the money for me from Shadrach, of the Old Jewry?"

"What! I go near the old Israelitish money-lender—not for the world, sir! No, Mr Tradescant, there's only one course open to you, and that's the straightforward one. Confess your errors to your father—fully, freely. 'Twill be a great pang to him, but he will forgive you—I am sure he will."

"I don't know that, Crutchet. My dad can be very obdurate if he pleases. When I last applied to him he was in a towering passion, and swore he would never help me again. And then, to mend matters, Captain Chatteris is hard up too, and means to ask for aid to-day."

"Lord bless us! and the captain has had his debts paid twice already! What will the world come to! We shall all be brought to rack and ruin by these young spendthrifts."

"Not so bad as that, Bow Bells," rejoined Tradescant, laughing. "Make yourself easy about me. I shall soon be all right. I've got a rich wife in view. Who do you think she is? You know her—or, at least, you know her father."

"Nay, I can't guess, sir. But I entirely approve your resolution. 'Tis the best thing you can do. But who may the young lady be, for I presume she is young?"

"Young and handsome, Bow Bells. She has only one drawback, namely, a vulgar old dad—but, to make amends for his vulgarity, he is astoundingly rich. Do you know old Walworth, the hosier, of St Mary-axe?"

"Is it Mr Walworth's daughter you have fallen in love with, sir? Oh! she'll do—she'll do."

"Yes, yes, I think she will do, Bow Bells. I abominate the notion of matrimony, but apparently there's no avoiding it. I've often seen Alice Walworth before, and thought her a fine girl, but the idea of marrying her never entered my head till last night, when I met her at Guildhall. I don't think it would have occurred to me then had I not been piqued."

"Well, sir, you can't do better, that's all I can say; and I'm of opinion the match will be agreeable to Sir Gresham. But what about the young lady, sir? Is she favourably inclined towards you?"

"She has more than half consented, Bow Bells. You shall hear how the thing was managed. Yesterday was a day of adventures to the Walworths. A young fellow who pretends to be a nephew of my father, suddenly turned up, and during the procession on the Thames to Westminster, managed to rescue Alice Walworth and her mother from drowning—their boat having been upset in the Thames. Such a daring feat was enough to give him a wonderful interest in a romantic girl's eyes, and I must do the young fellow the justice to say he is by no means ill-looking. Habited as he was last night in one of my best suits—confound his impudence in taking it! he cut rather a fine figure, and it was quite evident had began to make an impression upon Alice's somewhat susceptible breast—"

"Indeed, sir," interrupted Crutchet, "that doesn't augur well for you."

"Wait a moment and you shall hear. Enraged at the assurance of this pretender, I had some words with him near the refreshment-room, and, on quitting him, was determined to thwart his love projects. At that time Alice was dancing with a friend of mine, Mr Wilkes, so I immediately went and engaged her for the next dance, and the moment she was surrendered to me by Wilkes, I laid desperate siege to her, vowing I had long adored her, and acted my part so briskly that I soon found I was getting ahead of my cousin. However, not to give him a chance, I resolved Alice should not dance with him again, and by good management contrived to keep her out of his way during the rest of the evening—making the most of my time all the while. He could not learn that Alice was dancing with me, as I had cautioned Wilkes on that head. Time flew by—so quickly that it was four o'clock in the morning before Alice recollected that she ought to look out for papa and mamma—and as I now felt pretty secure, I had no objection to her doing so. Accordingly, we went in search of them, when who should we stumble on but Sir Felix Bland, who quite started at the sight of Miss Walworth, and told her her distracted parents had been looking for her everywhere, and had just gone home in despair. 'They couldn't have used their eyes to much purpose,' I said, 'or they must have seen her, for she has been dancing with me the whole evening.' 'Oh! that's it!' cried Sir Felix, with a knowing smile. 'However, Miss Walworth must go home directly.' 'I'll take her at once,' I said. 'No, that won't do,' he replied. 'I'll take her in my chariot—but you may go with us if you like, to explain matters.' This being settled, the good-natured alderman drove us to St Mary-axe, and you may imagine the scene that ensued when Alice was delivered to her disconsolate parents—ha! ha! ha!" And he threw himself back on his pillow to indulge his laughter unrestrained.

"And was Mr Walworth quite satisfied with the explanation, sir?" inquired Crutchet.

"He was too glad to have his daughter back again to ask any questions. As to Mrs Walworth, Sir Felix Bland, who I must say is the most obliging person in existence, soon set matters right with her. He told her I was quite smitten by Alice's charms, and insinuating that I meant to propose in form, appointed a meeting in the City Mall at half-past four o'clock to-day."

"I hope you won't disappoint them, sir. Ah, if you could but comprehend how much more respectable—how much happier you would be as a decorous domestic character than as a jaded votary of pleasure, thinking only of carding, dicing, racing, cock-fighting, operas, festinos, masquerades, and ballet-dancers, you wouldn't hesitate a moment. It was once my cherished hope that you would take the management of the concern down-stairs——"

"What! I become a draper! Never, Bow Bells, never! I would as soon turn hosier like my respected father-in-law—that is to be—old Walworth. But, talking of the shop, Crutchet, I forgot to tell you you are likely to have a new master, in the person of the young gentleman who pretends to be my cousin, and calls himself Herbert Lorimer. My dad declared yesterday, before a large assemblage, that he meant to place him in the establishment."

"Lord bless us! this is startling news indeed!"

"But it mustn't be, Bow Bells. Make it your business to dissuade Sir Gresham from so foolish a step. He'll listen to you."

"Oh, sir, I couldn't venture to oppose my opinion to my master's. No doubt he has excellent reasons for this determination. Mr Herbert Lorimer—"

"— shan't have a share in the concern, if I can prevent it. I'd sooner take the place myself."

"Ah, that would be something like, sir. There I would support you," cried Crutchet, brightening up.

"Nay, I was but jesting. Business would never suit me, Bow Bells; I'm not made for it. No, I must amuse myself. I can't lead a dull, humdrum, plodding life. I have no interest in City affairs and City folk like Sir Gresham. I must mix with the beau-monde, haunt the coffee-houses and the theatres, excite myself with a race, or at the cock-pit, or the Groom-Porters', or seek an adventure at Ranelagh or the masquerades. I should have found the ball at Guildhall horridly tame last night but for my love affair with Alice Walworth—ha! ha!"

"Ah, sir, I don't see much chance of your settling down into a steady character," sighed Crutchet. "If you have no further commands for me, I'll take my leave."

"Stay, Bow Bells, I haven't half done with you yet. I can't get a wife unless I have money, and I can't become steady unless I have a wife."

"Then follow the advice which I ventured to give you at first, and apply to Sir Gresham."

"Have you seen my father, Crutchet?"

"No, sir, he hasn't sent for me. But he is sure to do so before he goes to the Mansion House."

"I tell you what I'll do, Bow Bells—I'll get my mother to break the matter to him. Push that table towards me; it has pen, ink, and paper upon it. I'll write her a few lines." And as Crutchet complied, he set to work, and the note being written, he rang a handbell which was set upon the table, and the summons was immediately answered by Tiplady. "Take this to her ladyship, Tip," he added, giving him the note. As soon as the valet was gone, he continued, "I hope this will do the trick, Bow Bells; but if it fails, we must have recourse to Shadrach."

"I hope it will never come to that!" exclaimed Crutchet, with a shudder.

III.

TWO NOTES.

While the interview detailed in the foregoing chapter took place, the Lord Mayor was breakfasting in a lower room with the Lady Mayoress. His lordship was wrapped in a magnificent brocade dressing-gown, and looked little the worse for the fatigue he had gone through on the preceding day. Neither did his appetite seem impaired, for he had consumed the best part of a broiled fowl, and was helping himself to some potted meat, when his two elder daughters entered the room.

"Good morning to you both, my dears," he said, as they each kissed his cheek. "Delighted to see you. But how is it you are out so early?"

"We came early in order to see you before you go to the Mansion House, papa," said Lady Dawes. "We have something to say to you."

"Well, sit down and take some chocolate."

Sir Gresham soon perceived, from the looks and whispers exchanged between the Lady Mayoress and her daughters, that an attack was about to be made upon him. Nor was it long in coming. The Lady Mayoress opened the fire thus:

"In spite of their fatigues of last night, dearest Livy and dearest Chloris have ventured out, in order to tell you, Sir Gresham, how dreadfully shocked they are by what occurred at Guildhall, when that pitiful old wretch, whom you persist in calling your brother, was brought before his Majesty."

"Yes, papa," interrupted Lady Dawes, "I really couldn't sleep for thinking of it. But for this disagreeable incident, everything would have gone off most charmingly. What could induce you to acknowledge such a creature as I am told this wretched old man is?"

"It is perfectly unaccountable, papa," chimed in Mrs Chatteris, "and wholly inconsistent with your usual good sense and discrimination. Why, you'll make yourself the laughing-stock of the City."

"And then to complete the measure of his folly, your papa must needs send the old wretch here!" cried the Lady Mayoress. "But I'll pack him about his business pretty quickly."

"Hardly so, I think, my dear," observed the Lord Mayor, continuing his breakfast unconcernedly, "when you learn it is my pleasure he should stay."

"I think mamma quite right, I must own," remarked Lady Dawes; "and certainly, if I were in her place, I wouldn't submit to such an intolerable nuisance as this old man must prove. You can't be surprised, if she should proceed to extremities with him."

"Indeed but I shall—very much surprised," rejoined the Lord Mayor.

"Surely, papa, you won't distress us all, and disgrace the family, by bringing this miserable creature among us?" cried Mrs Chatteris. "I would never have believed it of you! Now, do be persuaded by me," she added, in a coaxing tone. "Let me give the necessary directions for his dismissal to Tomline."

"Hear me, Chloris. By this time all the City knows that this unfortunate man is my brother, and were I to cast him off as you recommend, disgrace would not only attach to me, but to you all."

On this a general sigh was heaved by the ladies.

"And pray what do you propose doing with your so-called nephew and niece, Sir Gresham?" inquired the Lady Mayoress, glancing at her daughters.

"My niece will remain here for the present," he returned; "and as to my nephew, he will be placed in the shop to-day. Crutchet will take charge of him, and if the young man goes on well, he will fill the position Tradescant ought to occupy."

"That is your intention, Sir Gresham?" said the Lady Mayoress, bitterly.

"That is my intention, madam," he repeated. "Oblige me with another cup of chocolate. If you would have allowed your son to be placed under Crutchet's care it would have been all the better for him."

"And why should Tradescant trouble himself about business, Sir Gresham? With his prospects—"

"Ay, there it is," cried the Lord Mayor, sharply. "It is owing to your perpetually prating to the lad about 'his prospects,' and putting ridiculous notions into his head, that he has become the idle fop he is. You will be responsible, madam, for any ill that may befall him."

"La! Sir Gresham, you quite frighten me," she exclaimed.

At this moment Tomline entered the room with a note, which he presented to Mrs Chatteris on a silver plate.

"From the captain, madam," he said. "He wished it to be delivered to you immediately."

"From my husband!" she exclaimed, taking the billet. "What can he want? Pray excuse me, papa."

Opening the letter, she read as follows:

"DEAREST CHLORIS,—I must have £1000 to-day—to discharge a debt of honour. Wheedle your papa out of the money. Exert all your arts, for if you fail I am done for. I have just been to your room, but find you are gone to Cheapside in your chair. Mind, nothing less than a thousand will do, and I must have it to-day.

"Your perplexed
"TOM."

"What's the matter, my dear child?" cried the Lady

Mayoress. "You seem agitated. Take some eau-de-luce," handing her a flacon. "No bad news, I hope?"

"Not very good," replied Mrs Chatteris, with an hysterical sob. "Dearest, dearest papa!" she exclaimed, rushing towards Sir Gresham, "I'm sure you will save him."

"Save him! Save whom?" cried the Lord Mayor, laying down his knife and fork, and staring at her.

"My husband—your son-in-law—Tom Chatteris. Save him from ruin—utter ruin!"

"Whew! Is it come to this?" cried the Lord Mayor. "Why, I paid his debts only a few months ago, and he then solemnly protested he would never get into the like scrape again."

"But this is a debt of honour, papa!"

"So much the worse. These so-called debts of honour are the most dishonourable debts a man can incur. An honest creditor is put off without hesitation, but a knavish gamester must be paid, because, forsooth, his is a debt of honour. What does your husband want, madam?"

"I'm almost afraid to tell you, papa. He'll never trouble you again. He won't, indeed! He wants—that is, he hopes you'll let him have—a thousand pounds."

"A thousand devils!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "He shan't have it."

"Oh, don't say so, dearest papa! You wouldn't see us ruined. Join your entreaties to mine, dearest mamma!"

"It will be in vain," rejoined Sir Gresham. "I won't listen to either of you. Captain Chatteris deserves to pay for his folly, and he *shall* pay for it."

Here Tiplady entered the room, and presented a note to the Lady Mayoress.

"From my master, your ladyship," said the valet.

"Oh, lud! my heart misgives me!" cried the Lady Mayoress, taking the letter.

"Why does your master write, puppy?—why not come here, if he has anything to say?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"His honour is not yet up, my lord," replied Tiplady. "He wrote the note in bed, and desired it might be given instantly to her ladyship." And, with an affected bow, he withdrew.

"I'll warrant it's to the same tune as t'other," muttered

Sir Gresham, noticing his wife's changing countenance as she perused the billet.

It was to this effect:

"If you have any love for me, mother, you will save me from dishonour and despair. I have been frightfully unlucky of late, and have lost more than I dare confess; but help me out of my present scrape, and I will abjure cards and dice in future. I will, upon my soul. Coax my father out of £5000. It's not all I want, but it will help me through the day. If you find him amiably disposed, ask for £10,000. I depend upon your getting the first-mentioned sum. Crutchet is now with me. He won't let me have a farthing more. Tom Chatteris is desperately hard up, and means to ask for money to-day, so it will be well to be beforehand with him.

"Your affectionate son,

"TRADESCANT."

"What's the matter?" demanded the Lord Mayor. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh no—nothing wrong," she replied; "that is—there's no use concealing it—the fact is, Tradescant wants money, Sir Gresham."

"I knew that was the burthen of his song," he replied. "Nothing less urgent would have caused him to write."

"Then I hope you have made up your mind to grant his request?"

"Hum! I can't say. How much does he want?"

"Well, Sir Gresham, he has been rather imprudent—but young men, you know, will be young men—he wants—but pray don't look so cross, or I shall never be able to tell you."

"Give me the letter, and let me see?"

"No, I can't do that. Since it must out, he wants ten—that is, five thousand pounds—and I hope you'll let him have it, Sir Gresham."

"Five thousand pounds!—why, it's a fortune!" cried the Lord Mayor, starting to his feet. "How can he have squandered away such a sum? He has been gaming—betting, dicing—but I'll know the truth."

"I won't attempt to defend him, Sir Gresham. Overlook his faults this once. He won't err again."

"I have overlooked his faults too often, madam," rejoined the Lord Mayor, sternly. "But a stop must now be put to his folly and extravagance. You are to blame for it."

"Oh! blame me as much as you please, Sir Gresham. I will bear all your reproaches without a murmur—but do let Tradescant have the money. I'll answer for his good conduct in future."

"And don't forget poor dear Tom, papa?" implored Mrs Chatteris. "He'll be ruined if you don't help him."

"*I* shall be ruined if I have to answer such demands as these upon me!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "Why, you ask me for six thousand pounds as if it was nothing. I can't do it, and WON'T. If these spendthrifts will go headlong to ruin, I can't help it. They must reap the fruit of their folly, and go to gaol."

"What! the Lord Mayor's son and son-in-law go to gaol!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, lifting up her hands. "You can't be serious, Sir Gresham."

"Zounds! this is enough to make me serious," he replied. "A pleasant commencement this to my mayoralty, truly! Just when I want to settle my spirits and get into a proper frame of mind for business, I must be ruffled in this manner. Do you know what I have to do, madam? I'll tell you. First of all, I'm going to the Mansion House, where I shall be engaged till twelve in giving audiences to I know not how many applications. Then I shall enter the justice-room, and shan't leave it till four o'clock. Then I dine at Merchant Tailors' Hall. This is what I have to do to-day, madam. I can't do it unless my mind is tranquil."

"Then pray tranquillize your mind, and tranquillize ours at the same time, Sir Gresham!" cried the Lady Mayoress.

"That is easily said, madam; but not so easily done. Large as are the sums you ask for, I would pay them without hesitation if I felt the slightest security that they would be the last required. But I have no such belief. On the contrary, were I to accede to this request, it would be followed by yet heavier demands. All Captain Chatteris's promises of amendment have been broken."

"But indeed, papa, he will reform," cried Mrs Chatteris.

"And Tradescant is just as little to be relied on."

"You can't tell that, Sir Gresham," cried the Lady Mayoress. "At least, give him a trial."

"I *have* tried him, and found him wanting. The thing must come to a stop. As well now, as later."

"Oh dear, Sir Gresham!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, applying her handkerchief to her eyes. "How contradictory you are! You are liberal to all the world except your own family."

"My poor dear Tom will be ruined—and then what will become of me?" cried Mrs Chatteris, sobbing like her mother.

"Well, I can't stand this any longer," said the Lord Mayor. "You'll drive me distracted. I'll go to Tradescant at once, and give him a little of my mind." And he dashed out of the room.

IV.

IN WHICH PRUE DEFENDS TRADESCANT.

About the same time, in a room in the upper part of the house, formerly used as a nursery, Millicent and Prue were seated at breakfast, talking over the various occurrences of the ball on the previous night, and while they were thus engaged, Herbert entered the room, habited in the plain attire in which he first appeared before his uncle.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, cousin Millicent," he said, saluting her and his sister. "I feared you might suffer—as I confess I do—from last night's dissipation. But it was a magnificent sight, and we must all rejoice we had an opportunity of witnessing it."

"Indeed it was!" exclaimed Prue; "and only think of Milly being so much noticed by their Majesties!"

"The King was, indeed, very gracious," replied Milly, "and gave me some advice by which I shall strive to profit. And the Queen was charming. What a delightful smile she has! But we saw very little of you, Herbert. I ought to scold you for not asking me to dance; but I suppose you found so many agreeable partners that you never thought of me."

"He is dreadfully ungallant, I must say," observed Prue; "but I trust he has some good excuse to make for his conduct."

"I had but one partner, and she was lost in a very extraordinary manner," replied Herbert.

And he proceeded to recount the mysterious disappearance of Alice Walworth.

"Mercy on us!—how strange! What can have happened to her?" exclaimed Millicent. "Have you made any inquiries this morning?"

"Not yet," he replied. "But I want to speak to you on another subject, Milly. I hope you believe how grateful Prue and myself feel for my good uncle's and your kindness to us. So deeply sensible am I of it, that I do not intend to notice certain very galling remarks made to me at the ball last night by your brother, and I trust the altercation may proceed no further. My position here, however, might be made so painful, that I could not remain—"

"I trust this may not be so, Herbert," interrupted Milly. "It would distress papa very much, and me too, if you and Prue were to leave us. You mustn't mind what Tradescant says. He is very hasty, but has a good heart."

"I'm very glad to hear you say so, Milly," he rejoined, "for then I shall have some hopes of succeeding in a scheme I have formed. I will venture to speak to you, because I know you must entertain the same feelings as myself in the matter, and will be able to advise me. If I pain you, therefore, in what I am about to say, forgive me, and attribute it to the right motive. Your brother is in a very perilous position."

"You alarm me very much, Herbert," replied Milly, looking anxiously and inquiringly at him.

"I trust you are mistaken, brother," said Prue, who had become deathly pale. "What is the nature of Tradescant's peril? Relieve our anxiety, I beg of you."

"I grieve to say he has got into the hands of sharpers," replied her brother, "and can only be saved from certain ruin by prompt and direct interference."

"Then why don't you interfere promptly and directly?" cried his sister. "If the persons into whose hands he has got are really sharpers and cheats, why don't you expose them? *I* would do so, were I you."

"Upon my word, you display a vast deal of spirit, Prue," replied Herbert, "and Tradescant has found a warm advocate in you."

"I have more faith in him than you appear to have," she replied, slightly blushing. "I can never believe that one endowed with such noble qualities as my cousin, can be so weak and unprincipled as you represent him. He may be a victim to the resistless passion of gaming, but ere long, I am persuaded, he will recover his judgment, and become ashamed of his follies."

"I wish you could accomplish his reform, Prue," observed Milly. "That would be doing him, and all of us, incalculable service."

"I will do my best, if I have the opportunity," rejoined Prue, blushing.

"Before you proceed further, Herbert," said Milly, "I would recommend you to take counsel of papa's manager, Mr Crutchet. He knows Tradescant's affairs better than any one else, and will be able to advise you. You will find him in the counting-house."

"I will go to him at once," replied Herbert.

And he left the room.

"Oh, Milly!" exclaimed Prue, as they were left alone together, "this is a sad state of things. But I do not despair of Tradescant's reform. Perhaps its accomplishment may be reserved for me."

"If you *should* accomplish it, you'll deserve—I won't say what," rejoined Milly.

V.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THE LORD MAYOR AND HIS SON.

PROCEEDING to his son's room, the Lord Mayor threw open the door without allowing Tiplady to announce him. Crutchet was still there, and immediately arose on Sir Gresham's appearance.

"Good morning, sir," cried Tradescant, forcing a laugh. "I didn't expect this early visit, or I would have prepared for you. Ten thousand pardons. Let me call Tip, and I'll be ready for you in a twinkling."

And, without waiting for his father's consent, he rang the bell violently, and the summons being instantly answered by the valet, he ordered him to draw the screen before the bed, and, springing out as soon as this was done, proceeded with Tiplady's aid to attire himself with all possible despatch. Meanwhile, the Lord Mayor, who could scarcely control his anger, continued to pace to and fro within the room, occasionally kicking some obstruction out of the way, and casting an angry glance at Crutchet, who looked beseechingly at him. At length, having completed his toilette, Tradescant stepped from behind the screen, and tried to put on an easy air.

"Once more, good morning, respected sir," he said.

"Leave the room, puppy," said the Lord Mayor to Tiplady. And as soon as the valet was gone, and the door closed, he continued:

"You must have plenty of effrontery to be able to look me in the face, sirrah, after what I have just heard from your mother. So you have been gambling, eh? Harkye, Tradescant, if there is one fashionable vice that I abhor and dread more than another, it is gaming. And that a son of mine should be a slave to such a vile passion, gives me inexpressible pain."

"But, Sir Gresham, your son has just promised me—"

"Don't talk to me about his promises, Crutchet. A gamester's promises are never to be relied on. All sense of honour, all right feeling is lost, when once that fatal passion has taken possession of the breast. There is but one way of curing him, and that I shall not hesitate to adopt."

"And pray what may that be, sir?" inquired Tradescant.

"Leaving you to get out of your difficulties as you can."

"But, sir, consider, these are debts of honour."

"The very last debts I should be inclined to pay. Debts of honour! And to whom are they incurred?—a pack of cheats and sharpers. Possibly, they may be titled cheats and sharpers, but they are just as great rogues as those of lower station. I'll pay none of them."

"What, sir, would you have me forfeit my position in society?"

"You deserve to forfeit it for your scandalous conduct. But you should have thought of this before. You have gone too far, sir. I know you would laugh at any counsel I gave you—"

"On my soul, sir, you wrong me. I see my fault, and will amend."

"I won't trust you, Tradescant. You are a gamester. Such a one is no longer his own master, but is slave to an evil spirit who tyrannizes over him inexorably. But I'll try to exorcise the demon. You have got a plague-spot upon you, and actual cautery alone will cure it. You may wince during the operation, but if it proves effectual it matters not."

"Why, sir, I shall have nothing for it but the road. I must ride out to Hounslow and Bagshot and take a purse; and then you may have the satisfaction of committing me to Newgate, trying me at the Old Bailey, and consigning me to Jack Ketch. How well it will read in the newspapers: 'The Lord Mayor's only son was turned off yesterday at Tyburn, and made a very fine ending.'"

"You won't drive him to such dire extremities, surely, Sir Gresham?" put in Crutchet.

"He may be hanged for aught I care," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "Harkye, Crutchet, I know your weakness for this young scapegrace. I forbid you to lend him money—peremptorily forbid you."

"When your lordship is a little calmer, perhaps you'll listen to reason," said Tradescant. "I take Mr Crutchet to witness that just as you entered the room I was discussing my future plans with him. I had expressed a lively sense of my past follies, and a firm resolution to reform. As an earnest of my intention, I design, with your permission, to marry."

"Yes, my lord, to marry!" cried Crutchet. "And the young lady Mr Tradescant has selected is one I feel certain your lordship will approve."

"Well, who is she?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"The daughter of Mr Walworth, the hosier, of St Mary-axe," replied Tradescant; "a very charming young person, with the additional recommendation of a large fortune."

"I believe you have more regard for the young lady's fortune than for herself, sir," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "But what sudden whim is this? Why, you and Tom Chatteris turned away from the Walworths in my presence last night, and now you tell me you intend to marry Alice. Like all the young coxcombs of the day, you think you have only to ask to be accepted."

"I'm pretty certain I shan't encounter a refusal on Alice's part," rejoined Tradescant.

"You surprise me. I own I thought she favoured your cousin Herbert, as was not unnatural after the very important service he rendered her and her mother yesterday."

"Whatever her feelings may have been towards Herbert at the commencement of the evening, sir, they were changed before the close."

"Well, that doesn't say much for her constancy. Such a volatile creature as you describe is likely enough to change again before noon."

"I flatter myself not, sir," rejoined Tradescant, with a self-complacent look. "But do you approve my choice? Do you consent?"

"If I withhold my consent, I will give you my reasons for doing so," replied the Lord Mayor. "In the first place, you know nothing of the girl, and cannot tell whether she would suit you, while your own description of her is far from being calculated to prepossess me in her favour. It is, evidently, mere caprice on your part, and probably the same on hers. A poor foundation this for an engagement for life. You must see more of her."

"But I can't afford to wait," cried his son. "The marriage must take place speedily, if at all."

"I understand," observed the Lord Mayor, coldly. "This young woman is to be sacrificed to pay your debts. Such an act, however unworthy, reflects no discredit on a modern fine gentleman. A broken fortune is thus easily repaired. But I will be no party to any such dishonourable scheme, sir. Neither will I allow this thoughtless girl to be duped. If this affair proceeds further, and Mr Walworth confers with me upon it, I will hide nothing from him. I will give him the result of my own experience, for, unfortunately, I know what it is to have a daughter married to a gamester. I shall ever reproach myself that I yielded to your mother's entreaties, and consigned your sister Chloris to Captain Chatteris. When you can convince me that you have abandoned play, I may consent to your marriage; but not till then."

"But you shut every door against me, sir," rejoined Tradescant, sullenly. "You will neither aid me, nor allow me to aid myself. How the deuce am I to get out of my difficulties?"

"That you must find out for yourself, sir, since you have been foolish enough to run into them," said his father.

"I ask your pardon, sir," said Crutchet, imploringly; "but I think, with all submission, that you are rather hard upon your son."

"I am determined to read him a lesson," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "He will thank me for it hereafter. I have now done, sir," he added, sternly, to Tradescant, "and leave you to your reflections. Come with me to my study, Crutchet. I have something to say to you before I go to the Mansion House."

"I come, my lord," replied the old man. But he lingered, as the Lord Mayor quitted the room.

"Oh, Mr Tradescant!" he groaned, "that ever I should live to see this day. I never remember Sir Gresham in such a way before. What will be the end of it?"

"Deuce knows!" rejoined the reckless young man, with a laugh. "He'll calm down by-and-by."

"I don't think so, Mr Tradescant—I don't think so. It'll break my heart if anything happens to you."

"Poh! don't be discouraged, Bow Bells. I shall get through it without damage."

"Dear! dear! what wonderful spirits you have to be sure. You can stare ruin in the face without blinking."

"Ruin! Who's thinking of ruin? It's all very well for old dad to grumble and lecture, but he'll never let me go to the wall—not he! He makes a pretence of buttoning up his breeches-pockets tightly, but he'll be obliged to fork out pretty handsomely by-and-by. He deserves to smart for his obstinacy. Whether I like it or not, he forces me to raise money. Nothing now but Shadrach and twenty per cent. You must go with me to the old usurer this afternoon, Bow Bells."

"It goes against my conscience, but I can't bear to see you harassed, Mr Tradescant."

"You're right, Bow Bells. I am confoundedly harassed—improperly harassed, I may say."

"Well, well. I won't exactly promise to accompany you; but, if I do go, it'll only be to keep you out of harm. But I must follow your father. He'll think I'm plotting against him if I stay longer. How will it all end?"

And with the slow, vacillating footstep denoting a heavy heart, he quitted the room, casting a compassionate look at Tradescant ere he closed the door.

As soon as he was alone, the young man threw himself upon a sofa, and indulged in the following self-communion. "I was a fool to make my old dad acquainted with my embarrassments, but I fancied I was all safe with my mother. She seems to have lost her influence over him. However, since he throws me on my own resources, he can't blame me for any steps I may take. And as to letting me go down for a paltry five thousand pounds, he won't do that. His own credit is at stake. The Lord Mayor of London must sustain his son—so I may make myself perfectly easy. The main point is to raise the money to-day. I must pay Wilkes and the others, and have my revenge from Gleek and Bragge. How cursedly spiteful old dad is in regard to my matrimonial project. But he shan't frustrate the scheme. Opposition only makes me determined to marry the girl. I'll have her—with or without old Walworth's consent. But I must proceed to make my toilette, for I've plenty to do to-day. Here, Tip," he added, as the valet appeared in answer to his bell, "send Le Gros to dress my peruke, and if Mr Wilkes or any other of my friends should call, show them up-stairs."

"What will your honour please to take for breakfast?" inquired Tiplady.

"A grilled chicken, an omelette aux fines herbes, and a bottle of Bordeaux," replied Tradescant. "En attendant, Tip, a thimbleful of usquebaugh to steady my nerves. They have been confoundedly shaken."

An hour or so elapsed, and during this interval Tradescant had completed his toilette to his entire satisfaction. His flaxen peruke had been dressed and carefully adjusted by Le Gros, and he was discussing the grilled chicken and claret, when Captain Chatteris burst into the room. The captain had just been informed by his wife of the ill-success of her application on his behalf to Sir Gresham, and he came to Tradescant to complain of the shabby treatment he had experienced, and to concert measures with him for obtaining a supply.

Tradescant told him he was in the same predicament himself, and recommended him to accompany him to the Jew money-lender's, where possibly they might both be accommodated, and to this proposition Chatteris unhesitatingly assented. Tradescant then proceeded to acquaint his brother-in-law with his newly-fledged matrimonial scheme, at which the captain laughed heartily.

"I'll go with you to the City Mall at half-past four," he said, "to see how the affair comes off. But, meantime, we must look up Shadrach. It is highly important to take Old Bow Bells with us. The very sight of him will induce Shadrach to lend the money."

As soon as Tradescant had finished breakfast, the two young men went down-stairs, and knocking at the door of communication between the house and the shop, were instantly admitted to the counting-house by Crutchet.

VI.

IN WHICH MR CANDISH APPEARS IN A NEW CHARACTER.

On quitting Tradescant Crutchet descended to the first floor, and proceeded to the Lord Mayor's study, which was situated at the end of the gallery, and looked towards the back of the house. It was small, plainly furnished, and contained a bookcase, a table provided with writing materials, and a few chairs. Over the chimney-piece was a portrait of the founder of the house, Mr Tradescant, a handsome, portly man, attired in a dress of the early part of the century—square-cut maroon-coloured coat, with gold-edged button-holes, flowered silk waistcoat, formally-curled peruke, and cravat fringed with lace. On entering the study, Crutchet found the Lord Mayor standing with his back to the fire, evidently expecting him with impatience.

"What! more last words with that graceless boy, Crutchet?" he cried.

"I know he has been very foolish, and I'm not surprised you are very angry with him, sir. Still, I wish you would view his conduct a little more leniently."

"I've made up my mind, Crutchet, and all your persuasions won't change me. Nothing, indeed, but your blind partiality would induce you to attempt his defence."

"I do dote upon him, Sir Gresham. When I consider whose son he is, and whose grandson," he added, glancing at the portrait over the fireplace, "I can't and won't despair of him."

"Well, I trust you may prove to be right, and I wrong, Crutchet. But I must once more caution you against lending him money."

"Your caution comes too late, my lord."

"Why, you stupid old dotard—you deserve—I don't know what. 'Sdeath! I never thought to be really angry with you, Crutchet, but I am now. How dared you lend my son money, sir, without consulting me? You have encouraged him in his profligate ways—undermined my authority—betrayed my confidence—deceived me, sir."

"How so, Sir Gresham? Surely I have a right to do what I please with my own?—to give my money to whom I choose—to throw it away, if I think proper!"

"You have no right to corrupt my son, sir. How much have you lent him? Tell me at once, that the debt may be discharged."

"I can't tell you, Sir Gresham. I have kept no memoranda."

"No memoranda! Impossible, sir. This is the way I am to be treated. My commands set at naught—"

"I have never disobeyed you, Sir Gresham. I have been a faithful servant to you, as I was to my honoured master, Mr Tradescant, and I can give a good account of my stewardship."

"Forgive me, my good friend," said the Lord Mayor, grasping his hand warmly. "I was too hasty."

"I know I have been to blame in this matter," replied Crutchet, much moved, "and can only say in excuse—that I couldn't help it."

"The young rascal knows his power over you, and abuses it. 'Tis well I am made of sterner stuff. However, though this concerns me much, it is not what I want to speak to you about. Have you any recollection of my brothers, especially of the elder of them, Lawrence?"

"To be sure I have, Sir Gresham. I knew them both when you lived in Bucklersbury. But they wanted your steadiness. Neither of them would work. Lawrence was fond of plays, and Godfrey idled his time in the streets."

"Should you know Lawrence, think you, were you to see him again?"

"No doubt—but I fear I shan't behold him again in this world."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied Sir Gresham, ringing a bell. And he added to Tomline, who answered it, "Request Mr Candish to come to me."

"If I am not misinformed, my lord, you had a visit yesterday from some relations you never saw before?" remarked Crutchet.

"True!—a nephew and niece, children of my poor brother Godfrey, who, it appears, died some years ago at York. I was going to tell you about them. My niece, Prue, is a very amiable, pretty young woman—all I could desire, in short—but her brother, Herbert, pleases me best—a fine, spirited young fellow. Would Tradescant were like him."

"I'm sure your son has spirit enough, my lord. Ah! you'll live to be proud of him yet."

"But with all his spirit, Herbert has no distaste to business—quite the contrary—so it's my intention to place him in my own concern, and, if he turns out well, to make him a partner. You must take him in hand, Crutchet. Fit him for the post."

"I'll do my best, my lord," returned the old man, with a sigh, feeling that Tradescant would be entirely superseded.

"Engrossed as my time will necessarily be by the important duties of my office," pursued the Lord Mayor, "I shan't be able to attend to my nephew, and must leave his instruction to you. You shall see him presently. But what keeps Mr Candish? I thought he would have been here before this."

"Pray who is Mr Candish, my lord?" asked Crutchet.

"You'll see," replied the Lord Mayor. "I'll try whether he knows him," he added to himself.

With this he sat down at the table, with his back to the door, pretending to busy himself with some papers, leaving Crutchet standing near the fire.

Shortly afterwards the door was opened, and some one entered the room. Sir Gresham had no doubt it was Candish, but he did not turn round to look, wishing to ascertain what effect his brother's appearance would produce upon Crutchet.

In no way prepared for the new comer, Crutchet was not surprised, as he might have been, if he had heard a description of him. He beheld a little old man, dressed in a peach-coloured velvet coat very much faded, a tarnished laced waistcoat, and tawny velvet breeches just as much worn as the coat, pink silk stockings hanging loosely on his shrunken calves, and shoes with paste buckles. His costume was completed by a well-powdered wig with a high foretop, ailes de pigeon, and a prodigiously long queue. A touch of rouge on the sunken cheeks, together with a couple of mouchets artistically placed, and a little darkening of the eyebrows, gave an entirely different expression to the old man's face. His dress, looks, and manner were those of a superannuated beau. He carried a three-cornered hat under his arm, and a cane in hand. On entering the room, he made a very ceremonious bow to Mr Crutchet, who returned it, and said,

"His lordship is occupied for the moment, sir."

"Oh! don't disturb his lordship for the world," replied Candish, in accents totally unlike those of the day before, being high and affected—"I can wait. Allow me to offer you a pinch of snuff, sir."

"Eh day! what's this?" thought the Lord Mayor. "That doesn't sound like Lawrence's voice.—Give Mr Candish a chair, Crutchet. I shall have done in a moment. Talk away. You wont't disturb me."

"A thousand thanks, my good sir," said Candish, declining the chair. "Mr —— I didn't quite catch the name."

"Tobias Crutchet, at your service, sir."

"Do you recollect the name, Mr Candish?" asked Sir Gresham, without looking up.

"Not in the least, my lord," replied the individual appealed to.

"Come here, Crutchet," cried the Lord Mayor; adding, in a low tone, as the other drew near, "Well, who is it?"

"I don't understand your lordship," replied Crutchet. "I've never seen the gentleman before."

"Look again! Observe him narrowly!"

"I'm quite at fault, my lord."

"Why, you're blind and stupid! Don't you recognize—ha!"

The latter exclamation was uttered as the Lord Mayor turned round and perceived the extraordinary transformation that had taken place in Candish. So totally changed was he that Sir Gresham himself did not know him again.

"Zounds!" he exclaimed, "I can scarcely believe my eyes. Are you the individual I saw yesterday?"

"The identical person, my lord," replied the other, with a profound bow. "A good night's rest and a good breakfast have wonderfully improved me; while by your kindness, and the attention of your coiffeur, M. le Gros, I have been provided with these habiliments."

"Well, I was about to acquaint Mr Crutchet with some circumstances connected with your history, but I shall now defer them to another opportunity. Mr Candish is an old friend of mine—a very old friend, Crutchet, and I fancied he had been an acquaintance of yours. He will remain with me for the present—perhaps altogether—and I wish him to be treated like one of the family."

"He shall have nothing to complain of as far as I am concerned," said Crutchet, greatly surprised.

"Your lordship is a great deal too good," cried Candish.

At this moment the door was again opened to admit Herbert.

"Good morrow, nephew!" cried the Lord Mayor. "Glad to see you. I have just been speaking of you to Mr Crutchet—telling him that I design to place you in my establishment, and recommending you to his best attentions."

"Mr Herbert Lorimer has only to command me," replied Crutchet, bowing to the young man. "He will find me in the counting-house whenever he wants me, and I shall always be at his service. Your lordship, I presume, does not require me further?" And, with a general bow to the company, he departed.

"Have you forgotten Mr Candish, Herbert?" said the Lord Mayor.

"What! is this he? On my soul! I didn't know him. Excuse me, uncle—you are so changed."

"Prithee, young gentleman, do not address me by that title again. I am no more your uncle than I am the Lord Mayor's brother."

"Well, let him have his way," rejoined Sir Gresham. "But notwithstanding his denial, it is my intention to treat him as a brother, and to unbosom myself to him, as well as to you, nephew. I grieve to say, then, that my son, Tradescant, has acquired a taste for play, which, if not checked, may lead to lamentable consequences."

"Your lordship, I fear, is hardly aware of the full extent of your son's danger," observed Herbert. "It is right you should know the worst, that you may guard against it. I heard enough last night to convince me that my cousin Tradescant is in the hands of sharpers."

"Sharpers! Then indeed he is lost!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Oh! my unhappy boy!"

"Why did you tell him this?" whispered Candish.

"I did it for the best," replied Herbert. "But I fear I was too abrupt."

"I thank you for your sincerity, Herbert," said Sir Gresham, recovering himself. "It is best to know the truth, however painful it may be. But oh! to think he should have come to this!"

"Who are the sharpers with whom Tradescant has been playing?—are they notorious cheats?" demanded Candish.

"It would seem so from what I heard. They are named Gleek and Bragge."

"Two arrant knaves as any that infest the gaming-tables, and as little likely to abandon their prey as any of their rapacious tribe," rejoined Candish. "Nevertheless, my lord, I do not despair of rescuing your son from them. But I must have a little money for the purpose. My pockets, I need scarcely say, are quite empty."

"Take what you please," cried Sir Gresham, producing a pocket-book, and offering him notes—"a hundred—two hundred—"

"A hundred will suffice for the present," rejoined Candish. "If I want more I will ask for it."

"Can I be of use in the plan?" said Herbert.

"I count upon you," rejoined Candish. "If possible, my lord, I will extricate your son from the peril in which he is involved, and without making the affair a public scandal, which, for his sake, and for your sake, too, ought to be avoided."

"It *must* be avoided—at any sacrifice on my part. There must be no public scandal. I should never hold up my head again, if such a disgraceful affair as this should take wind."

"Have no fear, my lord. It shall not do so," rejoined Candish."

"Let me give you both a caution," said Sir Gresham. "Whatever your plan may be, do not confide it to Mr Crutchet, or the object may be defeated. Though one of the trustiest persons breathing, he cannot keep a secret from Tradescant. You must therefore be upon your guard with him."

"It was well your lordship cautioned me, for I was about to consult him on the subject," observed Herbert.

At this moment Tomline entered to say that his lordship's chariot was waiting to take him to the Mansion House.

"I'll come directly," replied Sir Gresham.

"You must excuse me, Lawrence," he added, as soon as the man was gone; "and as I may not see you again until late in the day, let me beg of you to make yourself perfectly at home here. Consider this room as your own. Order what you please, and do what you please. I will give directions to the servants to attend to you. It will be your own fault if you are not comfortable. As to you, Herbert, Mr Crutchet will be glad to see you in the counting-house." And with a kindly look at both he quitted the room.

Proceeding to his dressing-room to make some needful change in his attire, he then entered his chariot, and drove to the Mansion House.

Acting on his uncle's suggestion, Herbert went down to the counting-house, and while employed there made a discovery, which he thought it necessary to impart without delay to Candish.

VII.

THE LOWER WALKS IN MOORFIELDS.

A LONG discussion had taken place in the counting-house between Crutchet, Chatteris, and Tradescant, and this discussion Herbert overheard. As Crutchet positively refused to enter Shadrach's dwelling, it became necessary to make an appointment with the money-lender elsewhere. Accordingly a note was despatched by Tradescant to Green Dragon-court, Old Jewry, where Shadrach dwelt, desiring him to be at a particular part of the Lower Walks in Moorfields at four o'clock, to meet some gentlemen, who would not care to be seen at his house. The hour and place were fixed to suit Tradescant's engagements with the Walworths in the City Mall. Half an hour would suffice for the transaction with the Jew. An answer was brought back by the porter to the effect that Mr Shadrach would not fail to attend to the appointment. It may be proper to mention that a handsome fee to the messenger had procured the wily Jew full information as to whom the note came from. It was then agreed between Crutchet and the others that they should find their way separately to Moorfields, and meet, as if casually, at the place of rendezvous.

Accustomed to dine at an eating-house at two o'clock, Crutchet did not return to Cheapside after his meal, but, the afternoon being fine, proceeded along Coleman-street, in the direction of Moorgate, unconscious that he was followed by an elderly individual wrapped in a roquelaure, who had dined at the same eating-house as himself, and had quitted it the moment after him. Contrary to his custom, which was to walk briskly, Crutchet proceeded very leisurely. The Cambridge coach first attracted his attention; then some waggons drawn up near the Bell Inn; and lastly, Moorgate itself; for though he had pressed through the gateway many a hundred times before without bestowing much regard upon it, he now paused to contemplate it with a melancholy kind of interest.

This gate, which could not boast much antiquity, having only been erected some eighty or ninety years previously on the site of a much older structure, was accounted the most magnificent in the City, and consisted of a lofty arch, which could be closed if required, with a postern on either side of it. The upper part of the fabric, comprising two storeys, and forming a commodious dwelling-house, was ornamented with Corinthian pilasters, above which was a round pediment displaying the City arms. The arch was unusually lofty, being so built, it was said, to enable the train-bands to carry their pikes erect while marching through it. The rooms over the gateway were assigned to Mr Towse, the Lord Mayor's chief carver. Though the edifice was in very good preservation, and justly admired for its beauty, it was found inconvenient, owing to the increasing traffic in that part of the City, and its removal had been decided upon. Aware it was doomed, Crutchet, who had known it ever since he was a boy, now contemplated it with regret. At last he moved on, passed through the right-hand postern, and found himself in Moorfields.

This extensive piece of ground, which would now-a-days be termed a "park," was very charmingly laid out in four large grass-plots, or "quarters," as they were called, intersected by broad gravel-walks, and was much frequented by the citizens for purposes of exercise and recreation. The mid-walk, which was of considerable length, with a row of well-grown elm-trees on either side, and seats for the convenience of promenaders, was designated—owing to its being the resort of all the persons of fashion to be met with at the eastern end of the metropolis—the City Mall. And if the smartness of the company who frequented it was to count for anything, it might be fairly said to rival the Mall in St James's Park. On Sundays and holidays the City Mall was thronged; but even on ordinary occasions it was greatly frequented, and exhibited much more variety of character than could be found at the West-end. Here might be seen the citizens' wives and daughters flaunting in all their finery, and displaying their charms to the Moorfields maccaronis, whose hats were cocked diagonally over the right or left eye, and who gave themselves quite as many airs as the coxcombs of St James's. But the City Mall was really very lively and amusing, and had something of a continental air. Booths and small shops, where fans, toys, trinkets, confectionery, and other light matters, could be purchased, were arranged under the trees, and there was generally some show or mountebank diversion to be witnessed on the "quarters." The central walk could be lighted up at dusk by lamps swung from ropes attached to the trees on either side. A grand termination to the vista on the south was offered by Bethlehem Hospital, which, with its noble façade upwards of five hundred feet in length, its three pavilions, high roof, and handsome stone balustrades, looked like a palace, and indeed had been built on the model of the Tuileries, to the infinite annoyance of Louis XIV.

Taking his way along the high wall, built of brick and stone, which enclosed the spacious gardens laid out for the recreation of the unfortunate inmates of the asylum, Crutchet walked on until he came to a grand semicircular sweep, in the centre of which was a pair of magnificent iron gates, forming the principal entrance to the hospital. On the piers to which these gates were hung were placed the two life-like statues, representing raving madness and melancholy madness, executed by the elder Cibber, and alluded to in the Dunciad:

Where, o'er the gates, by his famed father's hand,
Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand.

Having spent a few minutes in surveying this stately edifice and its gardens, Crutchet turned in the opposite direction, and looked down the City Mall. The promenade was now thronged by gaily-dressed folk, but being in no mood to join them, Crutchet kept close by the hospital wall until he reached the east side of Moorfields, where there was a long range of stalls belonging to second-hand booksellers, and dealers in second-hand goods of all sorts. While he was examining the volumes on one of these stalls, the individual who had followed him so pertinaciously came up, and employed himself in a similar manner. A quarter of an hour passed in this way, when glancing at the large clock placed in the central pavilion of the hospital, and finding it only wanted a few minutes to four, Crutchet proceeded to the place of rendezvous, and, just as he reached it, Tradescant, looking the very pink of fashion, got out of a sedan-chair, and joined him. In another moment Captain Chatteris made his appearance from another chair, and shortly afterwards a little old man, dressed in black, and wearing a dark hair-cap, surmounted by a large three-cornered hat, and having unmistakably Jewish features, approached them. This was Shadrach, the money-lender. After the needful introductions had taken place, the whole party left the walk, and repaired to an unoccupied bench near a large tree on the west side of the "quarter." They had not long seated themselves on this bench, when the person who had been watching Crutchet came cautiously up, and planted himself on the other side of the tree, the trunk of which was quite large enough to screen him from observation.

"Well, Shadrach," commenced Captain Chatteris, "you can guess what we want with you."

"Yes, yes, I understand, captain," replied the Jew; "but you couldn't have come to me at a worse time. Money's very scarce—the market's exceedingly tight, as Mr Crutchet will tell you. However, I'm always happy to accommodate my friends, if I can. How much do you want, captain?"

"Only a thousand pounds," replied Chatteris.

"Only a thousand, eh! A mere trifle! why I shall have to borrow it myself at fifty per cent., so I must charge you seventy-five, my dear."

"Seventy five per cent.!" exclaimed Crutchet. "Have you no conscience, Mr Shadrach?"

"Consider the scarcity of money and the risk I run, Mr Crutchet," replied the Jew. "But I must have good security, captain.—What can I do for you, sir?" he added, turning to Tradescant.

"I want a much larger sum than Captain Chatteris," replied the other. "Nothing short of five thousand pounds will serve my turn."

"Bless my soul! that *is* a large sum. I haven't got half the amount, and how am I to procure the remainder?"

"That you know best, Shadrach. But I want it without delay."

"But it's not to be got in an instant, my dear; and if I lend you the whole sum, I can't oblige the captain."

"Well, never mind me," observed Chatteris. "Give Mr Lorimer the preference."

"But I can't do it for seventy-five per cent. I must have a hundred."

"Well, well—a hundred be it," rejoined Tradescant. "Only let me have the money speedily."

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed Crutchet. "You must not yield to such infamous extortion."

"As Mr Lorimer pleases," rejoined Shadrach, with affected indifference. "I shall make no abatement. I can't afford to do it under."

"I agree, I tell you," observed Tradescant.

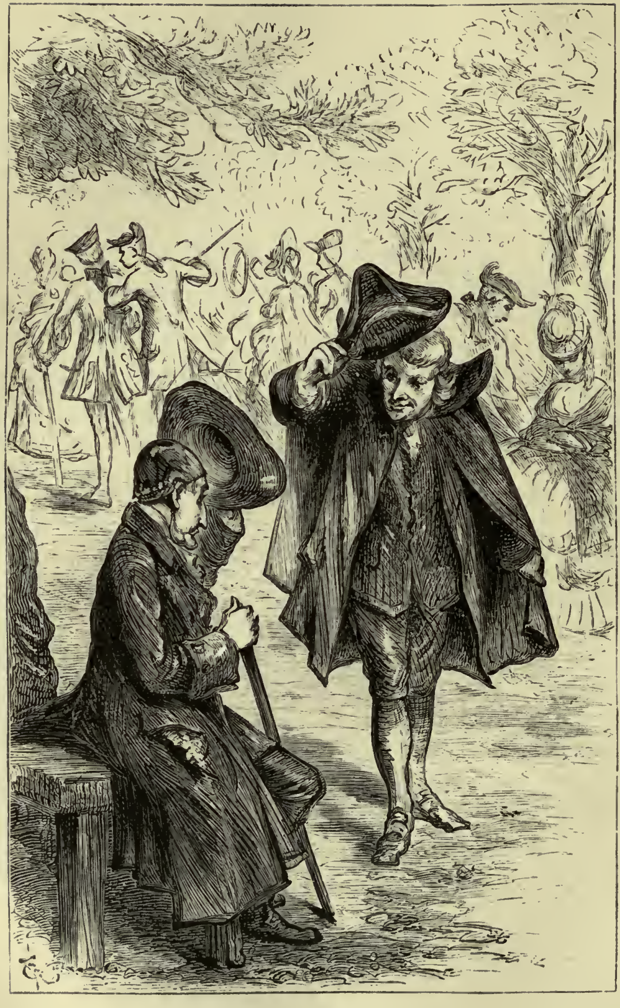
"But five thousand is a serious sum, sir," and if I lend it I must have good security. I have every reliance upon you as the Lord Mayor's son, but the debt may be disputed. You must give me your bond, my dear, and Mr Crutchet must join you in it. Without this, I won't do it."

"Well, there will be no difficulty in that, Shadrach. You are willing to join in the bond, eh, Crutchet?"

"I don't like it, and I'm sure you'll repent the transaction, sir."

"Nonsense!—the matter may be considered settled, Shadrach. But I must have the money to-day."

"Well, if you can manage to be at Moss and Levy's



Shadrach and Mr. Candish.

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offices in the Barbican, at seven o'clock this evening, you may, perhaps, be accommodated."

"This is a bad business, sir," groaned Crutchet, "and I wish I could dissuade you from going on with it."

"Have done with this croaking," cried Tradescant, rising from the seat. "We will be with you at Moss and Levy's punctually at seven, Shadrach."

"Mr Crutchet must come with you, my dear," said the Jew.

"Oh yes, I'll bring him," replied Tradescant.

"Have you done with me now, sir?" inquired Crutchet. And receiving an answer in the affirmative, he bowed stiffly to Shadrach, and quitting Moorfields, hastened back to Cheapside. Tradescant and Chatteris remained for a few moments talking to the Jew, and then proceeded towards the Mall, very well satisfied with the result of the negotiation.

Shadrach remained where he was, watching them, with his arms folded upon his breast, and a contemptuous grin playing upon his sallow countenance. All at once, a slight noise aroused him, and he perceived an old gentleman, wearing a roquelaure, standing on his right.

"Your servant, Mr Shadrach," said this personage, bowing politely.

"Sir, your humble," replied the money-lender, raising his hat.

"Don't let me disturb you, sir, I beg," said the stranger. "I'll take a seat beside you. Will a pinch of snuff be agreeable?" offering him a box. "You sometimes lend money, I believe, Mr Shadrach?"

"Sometimes," replied the Jew, wondering whether the old gentleman wanted to borrow; "but only on good security, sir."

"Oh! that's understood," rejoined the other. "Large interest and no risk; that's your maxim—eh, Mr Shadrach?"

"Not exactly my maxim, sir. But it's not a bad one—ha! ha!"

"You may be surprised at the interest I take in you, Mr Shadrach, but you'll find out my motive presently. Excuse me for putting the question, but I hope you're not going to lend money to the two sparks who have just left you?"

"I must decline to answer that question, sir."

"As you please. My desire is to serve you. I should be sorry you lost your money."

"Lose my money!" echoed the Jew, tapping his nose. "There ain't much chance of my doing that, Mr What's-your-name."

"Candish is my name, Mr Shadrach. I've given you a friendly hint. You'll do well not to neglect it."

"And pray, Mr Candish, do you know the two young gentlemen whose credit you're trying to shake?"

"Perfectly well, sir. One is the Lord Mayor's son, Mr Tradescant Lorimer: the other, the Lord Mayor's son-in-law, Captain Chatteris. Both extravagant, both in debt, and consequently both obliged to have recourse to you."

"Well, sir, your description, I own, is tolerably accurate; but I see nothing very alarming in it. If they can't pay, some one else can; and that's all one to me."

"Perhaps you calculcate upon the Lord Mayor, Mr Shadrach? You think he will come down, eh? If so, allow me to set you right. His lordship won't pay one farthing. Nay, more, he'll take every possible means of punishing you. The prodigality and vices of these young men have exasperated him beyond endurance, and be the consequences what they may, he is resolved to make them feel the effects of their folly. I will confess that I played the eavesdropper just now, and overheard your bargain with the young prodigals. But I am persuaded, when you consider the risk you will inevitably run, coupled with the certainty of obtaining merely lawful interest—if that—you will hesitate in carrying it out."

"Oh no, sir, I shan't. Your arguments are very plausible, but they don't weigh with me. I'm content to run all risks. Besides, I've a better opinion of the Lord Mayor than you have, Mr Candish. He's not half so bad as you represent him. He won't let his son go to the wall, or his son-in-law either. No—no; I know better than that. But even if his lordship should disappoint me, I shall have Mr Crutchet to look to, so I shall be quite safe."

"You're wrong, Shadrach. You'll get into trouble, and lose your money into the bargain."

"I must take my chance," replied the Jew curtly. "I wish you a very good morning, Mr Candish. My respectful compliments to the Lord Mayor." And with a cunning leer, he bowed and departed.

"The crafty old rascal won't take fright," muttered Candish. "The profit is too great. What's to be done? Crutchet mustn't go to Moss and Levy's. But how to prevent him?—I'll turn it over as I go along."

Thus ruminating he shaped his course slowly towards Moorgate.

When Tradescant and Captain Chatteris gained the Mall, it was exceedingly crowded, and by rather a miscellaneous set—wealthy-looking merchants and bankers, sharp stockbrokers, tradesmen of every variety, apprentices, ladies, City beaux, City militiamen, footmen, nursemaids, and children. Through this concourse our young sparks made their way, but for some time they could discern nothing of the Walworths. At last, as they had got nearly to the farther end of the Mall, where it was less crowded, they perceived the objects of their quest. There undoubtedly were Alice and her mother: the young lady in an adorable rose-coloured satin sacque and fly-cap, and the elder in a sky-blue silk négligé and Ranelagh mob. Both wore a good deal of lace, and carried fans. Behind them strutted a little African page, leading a snowy French barbette by a ribbon. This sable attendant, whose hideous face glistened like polished ebony, and who answered to the name of Pompey, was attired in a semi-Oriental garb, his head being crowned by a muslin turban, with a few parti-coloured feathers stuck in it. The ladies were escorted by Mr Walworth and Sir Felix Bland.

In another moment the parties met, and all the customary greetings were gone through. Alice blushed on beholding Tradescant, cast down her eyes, and then raised them again to allow them to dwell fondly upon him. It was quite evident, from the manner in which young Lorimer was welcomed by Mr and Mrs Walworth, that he only had to ask and have; but not to leave him in any doubt on the subject, the ever-obliging Sir Felix Bland contrived to whisper in his ear, while shaking hands with him,

"It's all right, my dear boy. They're both mightily pleased with you—the mother especially so. Old Walworth means to come down handsomely, so the sooner you talk to him the better."

Acting upon this friendly hint, Tradescant, after a little tender discourse with Alice, begged a word with her father, and allowing the others to pass on a little in advance, at once opened the matter, and, with a preliminary flourish descriptive of the violent passion he had conceived for Alice—a passion which he declared he had every reason to believe was shared by the young lady herself—he concluded by asking the old hosier's consent.

"Well, Mr Lorimer," old Walworth replied, "I won't pretend to deny that this proposal is agreeable to me, and that I shall be very glad indeed to have you for a son-in-law, and very proud to be connected with your worthy father, the Lord Mayor, but, before we go any further, let me inquire whether you have asked his lordship's consent?"

"I have not thought it necessary as yet, sir, because I feel certain he will at once accord it," replied Tradescant. "When he finds my affections are fixed on so charming a person as Miss Walworth, he will offer no bar to my happiness."

"I trust it may be so, sir. To-morrow I shall wait upon him, and state my intentions in regard to my daughter. You shall have no reason to complain of me, Mr Lorimer. You won't take a beggar to your arms, sir."

"Oh! sir, you are too good. But Alice would be wealthy with no other dowry than her beauty."

At this moment, Sir Felix Bland, who had been casting an occasional backward glance towards them, received a look from Tradescant which caused him to loiter till they came up.

"Well, my dear Mr Walworth," said the little alderman, "I hope I may congratulate my young friend. All is settled, eh?"

"All is settled, so far as my consent is concerned, Sir Felix. But Sir Gresham has to be consulted."

"No opposition, I fancy, need be apprehended in that quarter, my dear Mr Walworth," replied Sir Felix. "I may venture, I think, to answer for my friend the Lord Mayor."

"That's very well, Sir Felix. But no positive engagement can be made till his lordship's sanction is obtained. May I ask you to accompany me to him to-morrow?"

"Anything I can do to serve you, my dear Mr Walworth, you may command. But this will be a positive pleasure."

"Sir, you are extremely obliging. I'm a plain man, Sir Felix, but I've saved a little money—"

"I know it, sir. We are all aware that Mr Walworth is rich—immensely rich—"

"No, not immensely rich—well off. I don't like to boast, Sir Felix, but I can give my daughter a plum, and I mean to give it her if I am satisfied."

"Upon my word, my dear Mr Walworth, you are exceedingly generous, and surpass the expectations I had formed of you. D'ye hear that?" he whispered to Tradescant. "A plum! You're a lucky dog."

"I've the highest opinion of the Lord Mayor," pursued Walworth, "and I shall esteem it an honour to be connected with him."

"Cheap at a hundred thousand pounds—cheap, I should say, my dear Mr Walworth."

"In confiding my daughter to the son of Sir Gresham Lorimer, I feel secure. The father is a guarantee for the son's good conduct."

"Very true, my dear sir—the father is a guarantee," replied Sir Felix, nodding.

"Some young men of the present day are sad rakes and gamblers. Now, such a son-in-law wouldn't suit me at all."

"What the deuce is he driving at?" muttered Tradescant to Sir Felix. "I hope he doesn't suspect me."

"I approve of your caution, my dear Mr Walworth," said the little alderman. "But Mr Lorimer inherits all his father's good qualities—an excellent young man, sir."

"You will have no reason to regret bestowing your daughter upon me, Mr Walworth," said Tradescant.

"That Mr Walworth feels, my dear young friend. Sir Gresham's consent has only to be obtained, and the wedding-day may be fixed as soon as you please, eh, Mr Walworth?"

"Just so, Sir Felix," replied the old hosier. "This being understood, Mr Lorimer, you can join my daughter, who, I make no doubt, thinks I have detained you long enough."

"When my obstinate old dad learns she is to have a plum, he won't refuse his consent," thought Tradescant as he returned to Alice.

So elated was he by the notion of the large fortune he was likely to obtain, he had now no difficulty in playing the ardent lover. They had taken a few turns in the Mall, when they met Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, attended by Wilkes and Tom Potter, and followed by a couple of laced and powdered footmen. Fearing his sisters might say or do something to mar his project, Tradescant got Captain Chatteris to explain matters to them, on which they became all smiles and civility to the Walworths, and professed to be charmed with Alice. Wilkes and Tom Potter, as may be supposed, did not fail to rally their friend on the expedition he had shown in running his head into a noose, and Tradescant was on thorns lest some of their jests should reach the ear of his future father-in-law. However, all went on pretty smoothly, and the whole party were moving along the Mall, laughing and chatting gaily, when they perceived Herbert coming towards them. The appearance of the young man at this juncture was agreeable neither to the Walworths nor to Tradescant, but Wilkes was secretly delighted, inasmuch as he anticipated amusement.

"Ha! here comes your cousin Lorimer," he cried.

"I must beg you not to apply that term to him again," cried Tradescant. "I disclaim all relationship with him."

"So do we all," exclaimed Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris together.

"Oblige me by not noticing the young man, Alice," said Tradescant. "He is personally disagreeable to me."

"Since you desire it, certainly," she replied; "but he will think me shockingly ungrateful."

"Never mind what he thinks. Look another way."

By this time Herbert had come up, and bowing to the party, was about to address himself to the Walworths, but, struck by the altered manner of Alice and her mother, and repelled by the haughty looks of Tradescant, and the disdainful glances of Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, he drew aside, and the party, with the exception of Wilkes, Sir Felix Bland, and Mr Walworth, passed on. Pained that the young man should be thus treated, Mr Walworth stammered out some apologies, but they were very coldly received.

"I have just called at your house in St Mary-axe, Mr Walworth," said Herbert, in a sarcastic tone, "to inquire after your daughter, and was glad to learn that she was brought back safely last night."

"Safe and sound, sir," rejoined the old hosier. "All's well that ends well, Mr Herbert."

"You did me the honour to make me accountable for Miss Walworth, Mr Herbert Lorimer," observed Wilkes, in a sneering tone; "but you will now perceive you might have spared yourself the trouble. She was in excellent hands."

"So it seems, sir," rejoined Herbert; "and I ought to have been quite sure that no credit was to be attached to your assertion that you had consigned her to some one with whom you were unacquainted."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Wilkes. "You have found that out, eh? A mere quibble, which I am sure Mr Walworth will now readily pardon."

"Don't say a word more about it, my dear sir," rejoined the old hosier.

"You may call it a quibble, sir," observed Herbert sternly, "but I should use a shorter and stronger word."

"Hold, hold! Mr Herbert," cried Sir Felix.

"What's that you say, sir?" demanded Wilkes, becoming very pale.

"If I have not made myself sufficiently intelligible, I will be yet more explicit," rejoined Herbert.

"Nay, it will do," cried Wilkes. "Your object is evidently to provoke me. I might well refuse to go out with you, but your impertinence deserves chastisement. You shall hear from me, sir."

"Sir Felix," said Herbert, "as I am almost a stranger in town, and have few friends, may I venture to ask your aid in this matter?"

"Mine! my dear sir. I avoid duels, whether as principal or second. However, to oblige you, I will break through my rule in this instance."

"You make me for ever your debtor, sir," replied the young man. And, raising his hat, he strode haughtily away.

End of the Second Book.

BOOK III.

TRADESCANT.

I.

MOSS AND LEVY'S.

At seven o'clock Tradescant and Chatteris were at Moss and Levy's in the Barbican.

Though the office was old and frouzy, a good deal of business of a certain kind was transacted within it. In the ante-room, boxes, apparently containing deeds and papers, were piled up to the very ceiling against the walls, and plans of estates and bills of auctions were stuck against the rails of the desks at which the clerks were seated. In this dirty and imperfectly-lighted ante-room the two young men were detained for a few minutes, much to their disgust. Tradescant had made sure of finding Crutchet there, but the old man had not yet arrived.

At length an inner door was opened by Shadrach, who begged them to step in, adding, as they complied, "All's ready, gentlemen. I've got the money, and the bond is prepared—but where's Mr Crutchet? We can do nothing without him."

"Oh! he'll be here presently," rejoined Tradescant, with affected indifference, but some internal misgiving.

At an office-table covered with papers, and lighted by a couple of flaring tallow candles, sat a sharp-looking, Jewish-featured man, dressed in black, who rose as the others entered the room, and was introduced by Shadrach as Mr Moss.

"Pray be seated, gentlemen," said the scrivener, motioning them to a chair. "Are we ready, Mr Shadrach?"

"No, sir," replied the money-lender. "We want Mr Crutchet."

"I can't think what has detained him," observed Tradescant, with increasing uneasiness. "However, he's sure to come."

"Oh! quite sure," added Chatteris.

Five minutes more elapsed, and still Crutchet did not appear.

Mr Moss took out his watch—a very handsome Tompion, with a gold chain and large bunch of seals attached to it—and held it to one of the candles.

"Quarter-past seven, gentlemen," he remarked. "I fear the business must be postponed."

"I hope not," cried Tradescant.

At this moment a clerk entered to say there was a person without who brought a message from Mr Crutchet.

"Show him in!" cried Shadrach, and the next moment Candish made his appearance.

"You here, sir!" exclaimed Shadrach, distrustfully.

"Mr Crutchet has sent me to make his excuses and express his regrets, sir," replied Candish, bowing.

"Excuses and regrets!" cried Tradescant, furiously. "I didn't think him capable of playing me such a shabby trick. He boasts that his word is as good as his bond, and he promised faithfully to be here."

"Perhaps Mr Shadrach will take his word instead of his bond," rejoined Candish, smiling.

"No, that I won't," cried the Jew. "But what prevents him from coming? Does he desire to make another appointment?"

"Here is a letter from him, which will explain all," replied Candish, handing a note to Tradescant.

"Why not give it me at first?" cried the latter, tearing it open. "You shall hear what he says."

And holding it towards the light, he read as follows:

"'Honoured and dear Sir,—Contrary to my better judgment, I consented this morning to become your security to Samuel Shadrach for the repayment of the sum of £5000, to be lent you by said Shadrach, and to give him my bond. Reflection has since convinced me that this is a most iniquitous transaction, and that so far from serving you, honoured and dear sir, by enabling you to procure such a loan, I should be doing you a great and permanent injury, and, at the same time, should be wronging my respected employer.'

"Hang him for an old hypocrite!" exclaimed Tradescant. "Why didn't he think of this before?"

"Proceed, sir," said Shadrach. Let's have the end on't!"

"The latter part doesn't seem over-complimentary to you, Mr Shadrach. However, since you wish it, I'll go on:

"'At the hazard of incurring your displeasure, I must, therefore, decline to have anything to do with the matter. I will neither enter that old extortioner's den, nor have any further communication with him.

"'Your faithful, humble servant,
"'TOBIAS CRUTCHET.'"

"'Old extortioner!' He calls me an 'old extortioner,' Moss," cried Shadrach. "That's libellous. I'll bring an action against him."

"I shouldn't be sorry, after his shameful conduct, if he had to pay heavy damages," cried Tradescant. "But can't you dispense with him, Shadrach? If I give you my bond, won't that suffice?"

"I'm afraid not, sir," replied the Jew. "But I'll just say a word to Mr Moss."

And sitting down by the scrivener, they conferred together for a few minutes in an under-tone.

"It's all up," whispered Tradescant to his brother-in-law. "I can tell from Moss's looks what the decision will be."

"I'm afraid you're right," replied Chatteris.

Their apprehensions were justified, for immediately afterwards Moss thus addressed them:

"In the absence of the proposed security, gentlemen, I cannot advise my client to lend the money. The sum is large, and the risk great. Unless you have other security to offer, there must be an end of the transaction."

"I've been put to a vast deal of trouble," grumbled Shadrach, "and apparently to no purpose."

"I'm the person most aggrieved," cried Tradescant. "I can't conceive what has caused Crutchet to change his mind so suddenly."

"But I can," replied Shadrach. "It's your doing, sir," he added to Candish.

"I won't deny it, Mr Shadrach," returned the other, coolly; "but, so far from being angry, you ought to be very much obliged to me."

"Obliged! for what?—for losing—"

"Cent. per cent. on five thousand pounds—that's what you counted on—but you would never have got it. I would have taken good care of that. Your intended contract, as Mr Moss very well knows, was unlawful, and would have been utterly void, while you yourself would have forfeited thrice the amount borrowed, a larger sum than you would like to lose, I fancy. Your scrivener himself would not have come off scot-free. In addition to a penalty, he would have got half a year's imprisonment, if he had been brought before the Lord Mayor. Therefore, I repeat, you ought to feel much obliged by my interference."

During this speech Shadrach and Moss exchanged uneasy looks, and the scrivener whispered to his client,

"You had better get rid of the matter. This person is evidently the Lord Mayor's agent."

"You are right, sir," replied Shadrach. "Gentlemen," he added to Tradescant and Chatteris, "I thought I was dealing with men of honour—"

"Why, so you are," cried both young men together. "We have nothing whatever to do with this person."

"I don't doubt it," replied Shadrach; "but sufficient care has not been taken to keep the affair private. Instead of appointing a public place like Moorfields for the negotiation, you should have come to my house. You would then have been safe from spies—yes, spies," he repeated, looking hard at Candish. "As it is, the arrangement was overheard—and you see the result. I'm sorry I can't accommodate you."

"I'm half inclined to cut this meddling old rascal's throat," cried Tradescant.

"Not here, sir, if you please," said Shadrach. "Inflict any punishment you choose upon him in the street, but not here."

"When you learn my reasons for what I've done, you'll be more inclined to thank me than harm me," observed Candish. "I'll wait for you outside. Mr Shadrach, your servant." And with a polite bow he left the room.

He was followed in a few moments by the two young men, who found him standing in the passage connected with the office.

"I hope you'll excuse me, gentlemen," he said, in an apologetic tone. "I have simply acted under orders. Can I be of any service to you?"

"A cool fellow this, upon my soul!" cried Tradescant. "He spoils our game, and asks if he can serve us. Harkye, sir, can you lend us a few thousand pounds?"

"Thousands are far beyond me, sir," replied Candish; "but if a trifle like twenty guineas would be of any use I can accommodate you."

"Well, that will be better than nothing," rejoined Tradescant. "It will pay our supper at Pontac's and enable us to try our luck at basset. Let us have the twenty guineas. I'll repay you to-morrow morning—perhaps to-night, if you come to Picard's ordinary, near Queenhithe Dock, before midnight."

"I won't fail to be there," said Candish; "but you can repay me, or not, at your convenience. You will find twenty guineas in this purse," he added, handing it to him. "I wish you good luck, sir."

"Harkye, sir," cried Tradescant. "I should like to have some explanation—"

"As much as you please to-morrow, sir," interrupted Candish. "But not this evening. You will see me at Picard's, where I may, perhaps, be of some further use to you. I think hazard is played there as well as basset?"

"Hazard, passage, inn-and-inn—what you please. And at cards, besides basset, you may play piquet, ombre, English and French ruff, five cards, costly colours, bone-ace, and put."

"Picard's tables are the best in the City," observed Chatteris. "As large sums are staked there as at the Groom-Porters', or Speering's ordinary in Bell-yard."

"So I've heard," replied Candish. "Is there likely to be deep play to-night?"

"There *might* have been," rejoined Tradescant, significantly. "I wanted to settle accounts with Gleek and Bragge, but that can't be done now, unless some great stake should turn up at basset."

"Can you inform me, sir, whether the two individuals you have just mentioned—Messrs Gleek and Bragge—will be there?" inquired Candish. "I should like to have an opportunity of witnessing their play."

"Then you may enjoy that pleasure to-night, for they are certain to be at Picard's. They expect to be paid, I tell you. However, I must find some means of pacifying them."

"Oh, yes, we'll manage it, never fear," rejoined Chatteris. "Since nothing else is to be done, let us go at once to Pontac's. I have asked Sir Theodosius Turnbull to sup there with us."

"With all my heart," replied Tradescant.

On this, they got into their respective chairs, bidding the men take them to Abchurch-lane, where the noted coffee-house in question was situated, while Candish returned to the Lord Mayor's house in Cheapside, where he found Herbert, with whom he concocted a plan to be put into execution that night.

II.

PICARD'S.

Picard's ordinary—a notorious gaming-house, where all the rooks and sharpers to be met with in the City flocked to prey upon the dissolute sons of wealthy merchants and traders—stood on the east side of Queenhithe Dock, close to the stairs. It had a large balcony on the first floor, overlooking the river, where it was pleasant to sit in the cool of a summer's evening, and watch the various barks float by. But it was not to indulge in such harmless recreation as this that the majority of Picard's customers went thither. Their object was play; and they found what they sought. The house possessed a basset-table with a well-supplied bank, and smaller tables for piquet, whist, and ombre. An inner room was reserved for games without the tables, and here could be heard the rattling of dice, the shouts of the casters, the exulting laughter of the winners, or the yells and fearful imprecations of the losers.

It wanted about a quarter to eleven when Candish and Herbert entered this den of iniquity. The old man had again altered his attire, and appeared in black, with a bag-wig and ruffles. Moreover, he had taken the precaution to provide himself with a sword, and Herbert was similarly armed.

The lower room was full of guests, carousing and smoking, but a glance around it satisfied Candish that those he sought were not there, so he and his companion went up-stairs to the principal play-room, which was of considerable size, and provided with card-tables, and a large oval table, set in the centre of the apartment, covered with green cloth, and designed for basset. A strong light was cast upon the tapis by a lamp furnished with reflectors, placed at either end. The table was large enough to accommodate twenty players, and about half that number were now seated around it. At one side of the room burnt a cheerful fire protected by a wire-guard, and on the other there were three French windows, opening upon the balcony, already described as overlooking the river.

Seated at the table with a pile of rouleaux of gold and a glittering heap of crown pieces before him, constituting the bank, was the tailleur, or dealer—a young man, rather showily dressed, with a perfectly impassive countenance. No turn of fortune, it was evident, was likely to move him. On his right stood the croupier, likewise a young man, but apparently of a very different temperament from his phlegmatic companion, his eyes being bright and quick, and his features extremely mobile. For the convenience of the punters, a little book containing thirteen cards was placed on the table opposite each chair. Besides those engaged in play, there were several other persons, whose features and manner proclaimed their dissolute character, collected in little knots in different parts of the room. They were betting together, making matches for Epsom and Newmarket, or disputing about the merits of different cock-feeders and trainers. Amongst these groups, the gayest-looking and most noticeable comprised Tradescant and Chatteris, with their fashionable friends, Wilkes, Tom Potter, Sir Francis

Dashwood, and Sir William Stanhope. With them also was Sir Theodosius Turnbull, a Leicestershire baronet, who had been a great foxhunter till he grew too fat and heavy for the saddle. He was now in pretty good cue, having drunk three bottles of the delicious Haut Brion, for which Pontac's was renowned. These personages were talking and betting much in the same style as the rest of the company.

"I'll lay six to four—sixty guineas to forty, if you like," cried Tradescant, "that Drew Barantine's great ginger-hackle beats any cock Tom Trattles can produce."

"Done! guineas," cried Tom Potter. "Tom Trattles is the best cock-master going. When shall the main be fought?"

"This day week," replied Tradescant. "Stay! that won't do. For aught I know that may be my wedding-day."

"So you really are going to marry the hosier's daughter, Lorimer?" said Tom Potter.

"I suppose so," replied Tradescant.

"I don't believe the match will take place," cried Wilkes. "The girl will jilt you, as she jilted your fire-eating cousin. Come, I'll bet you a hundred the marriage doesn't come off."

"Done!" cried Tradescant, "and I half hope I may be obliged to pay the wager."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed his companions.

"I'll bet you another hundred, Lorimer, that she marries your cousin," said Tom Potter.

"Take him," whispered Wilkes, "for I mean to cut the impertinent puppy's throat."

"Don't call him my cousin, I beg, Mr Potter," cried Tradescant, offended.

"Do you mean to run Regulus at Newmarket next spring, Lorimer?" inquired Dashwood.

"Assuredly, and I mean to win the Suffolk stakes."

"I'll take the field against you for fifty," said Dashwood.

"Done!" cried Tradescant.

"Don't book that!" cried Wilkes. "If you marry Alice Walworth you must sell Regulus. I heard old Walworth declare he didn't like gaming and racing—ha! ha!"

"That shan't hinder me from making the bet, Dashwood," rejoined Tradescant. "Marry or not, I don't sell Regulus."

"I applaud your resolution, Lorimer," said Stanhope.

"Well, I only wish I had your chance, Lorimer," remarked Wilkes. "Alice Walworth is a devilish fine girl. For her sake, I could be content to dwell in St Mary-axe, and even turn hosier, if my father-in-law made a point of it."

"No jokes at old Walworth's expense, if you please, Mr Wilkes," said Tradescant. "He's as rich as a nabob, and means to give his daughter a plum."

"A plum!" exclaimed Wilkes. "Egad, hosiery must be a better business than I thought. But I have no faith in these splendid offers. I'll take odds you don't get ten thousand with her."

"Two to one I do," cried Tradescant.

"Done!" rejoined Wilkes. "If the marriage fails, you pay."

"Pshaw! I'm sure to win. But between ourselves, I would rather have ten thousand without the wife, than a plum with her."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Tom Potter. "That's what I call a frank confession. I hope it won't reach the young lady's ears, or you are likely to get neither one nor the other."

"I'll lay odds the Lord Mayor doesn't consent to the match," said Stanhope.

"What makes you think that?" cried Tradescant, surprised.

"Never mind. Will you bet?"

"No; but I'll take odds I marry her without his lordship's consent."

"Then you won't get the sugar-plum," cried Wilkes. "If the Lord Mayor runs rusty—as you seem to fear he will—old Walworth will run rusty too, and decline the honour of the alliance. Of course the girl has nothing of her own, so it would be useless to run away with her. Make sure of your honoured sire, Lorimer, or the thing's up."

"But how the deuce am I to make sure of him?" rejoined Tradescant.

"If you've any misgivings, don't let old Walworth see him till the marriage contract is signed. Sir Felix Bland will manage that for you."

"Seventy to fifty old Walworth finds you out, Lorimer, and turns the tables upon you," said Stanhope.

"Done!—guineas," cried Tradescant. "I'll book all these bets, and then we'll sit down to basset."

The foregoing conversation had been conducted in so loud a key, that the greater part of it reached the ears both of Candish and Herbert, whose presence, however, was unnoticed by the speakers. As Tradescant took his place at the table, Candish stepped quickly forward, and stationed himself behind the young man.

As soon as they were all seated, the punters took up their thirteen cards, and selecting one or more, according to fancy, laid them on the table, placing a couch, or stake, on each.

Taking a pack of cards, the tailleur then turned it up so as to display the bottom card, which, in the language of the game, is termed the *fasse*, and which proving to be the eight of diamonds, all the cards of the same suit laid on the table paid to the bank a moiety of the stakes set upon them by the punters.

The tailleur next began to deal, calling out, "Ace of hearts wins—five of clubs loses—knave of diamonds wins—seven loses," and so forth—every other card alternately winning and losing until he came to the last, on which, by the rule of the game, although it had been just turned up, and was consequently known by the punters, some of whom had staked upon it, he paid nothing.

The game went on with varying consequences, but, as may be imagined, the greater part of the stakes speedily found their way to the bank. Tradescant had laid three cards on the tapis, putting ten pounds on each, but the money—all he possessed—was swept away before the second pack was dealt out. But the young man could not bear to stop. Yet how go on? He had not even a crown in his pocket. He glanced at Chatteris, but the latter shook his head. In this dilemma, Candish came to his aid, and taking a fifty-pound note from a pocket-book, offered it to him. Tradescant took it without a moment's hesitation, promising to return the amount at once if he was lucky. He was about to get the note changed at the bank, when Candish stopped him, and said, in a whisper, "Put down the whole sum on that ace of hearts, and try for the grand chance."

"I may try," replied Tradescant, laughing, "but I shan't get it. I never saw the sixty-seven won yet."

"Make the attempt now," rejoined Candish.

Tradescant complied, laid the note on the ace, and was shortly afterwards gladdened by the tailleur's cry of "Ace wins—tray loses."

"Well begun!" whispered Candish.

"Paroli!" cried Tradescant, bending down a corner of his card.

The tailleur dealt on, and the welcome words, "Ace wins," were repeated.

Candish made no remark, but gave the young man an encouraging look.

"Sept et le va!" cried Tradescant, bending down a second corner of his card.

"What are you about?" cried Chatteris. "You've thrown away your second chance—£350."

"Never mind him," urged Candish. "You're in a run of luck."

"On my soul I think so," replied the young man, laughing. "But I owe it to you."

Meanwhile, the tailleur dealt on, and once more, to Tradescant's infinite delight, called out, "Ace wins."

"Quinze et le va!" exclaimed Tradescant, turning down the third corner of his card.

"Seven hundred and fifty!—you won't tempt fortune further?" cried Chatteris.

Tradescant paid no attention to the remark. A look from Candish urged him on.

Again the tailleur dealt, and again were heard the cheering words, "Ace wins."

"Trente et le va!" exclaimed Tradescant, bending the fourth corner of his card.

"Sixteen hundred and fifty!—you had better take it," cried Chatteris.

The tailleur looked at him, something more than ordinary interest appearing on his immovable countenance.

Tradescant seemed undecided. Certain of a large sum, he did not like to lose it. But Candish whispered, "Courage! Push your fortune to its height."

By this time all the interest of the game was centred in Tradescant. His uninterrupted run of luck had surprised all the other players, and they wondered whether the fickle goddess would desert him at the last.

"Will you have your money, Mr Lorimer?" inquired the tailleur.

"No," returned Tradescant. "I'll try the last chance. Soixante et le va!"

The tailleur made no remark, but carefully shuffling the cards, began to deal them again, but much more deliberately than before.

"Ten to five—a thousand to five hundred—your card don't turn up," cried Tom Potter.

"Take him," whispered Candish.

"Done!" cried Tradescant. "I'll make the same bet with any one else."

"I take you—I take you," cried Wilkes and Dashwood together.

Scarcely were the words uttered, when the point was decided. The lucky card was again turned up, and Tradescant declared a winner of sixty-seven times the amount of his original stake—or £3350. Besides this, the bets he had won amounted to £3000 more. He could scarcely credit his good fortune.

"I owe all this to you," he said to Candish; "but you must share my winnings."

"You are very generous, sir," replied the old man; "but it must not be. I can only take back the sum I've lent you. But don't trouble yourself about me. Secure your money from the bank."

The caution did not appear altogether needless, for the tailleur and croupier, looking perfectly confounded by the unexpected stroke of fortune, made no attempt at settlement.

"The money, gentlemen, if you please," said Tradescant.

"You shall have three thousand pounds, Mr Lorimer," replied the tailleur, "and then the bank will be broken. We must owe you the remainder."

"Very good," replied Tradescant. "We are now quits," he added to Wilkes and Dashwood. "As to you, Sir William," he said to Stanhope, "instead of having to pay you four hundred pounds, you will owe me six."

"Exactly, my dear fellow," replied Sir William Stanhope, "and I congratulate you most sincerely on your good luck. Fortune for once has befriended you, but I advise you not to tempt her smiles again."

"You're afraid of me, I see, Sir William," cried Tradescant, intoxicated by his success.

"Count your money, if you please, sir," cried the croupier, pushing a roll of bank-notes, a pile of rouleaux, and a heap of crown pieces towards him.

"Shall I help you to count it, Tradescant?" said Chatteris, coming up.

"Ay, do, Tom," replied the young man. "And help yourself at the same time to a thousand. I little thought I should be able to accommodate you."

Chatteris did not manifest any scruples, but counting the bank-notes, and finding they made exactly the sum in question, he put the roll into his pocket.

"What the deuce shall I do with all these crown pieces?" observed Tradescant, laughing.

"I'll tell you what you shall do with them, my dear—you shall give them to me," said Shadrach, stepping forward from a corner where he had remained perdue. "Bless my heart! what luck you've had! I never saw such a thing done before, upon my soul."

"What! is that you, old cent. per cent.?" said Tradescant. "I didn't know you were in the room."

"Oh yes, Mr Lorimer, I've been here all the time. I've been sitting in yonder corner. I watched the game, my dear, and you played beautifully—beautifully indeed. What luck! bless my heart, what luck—ha! ha! ha! When I saw you win, I said to myself, 'Now's your time, Shadrach. You've only to put Mr Lorimer in mind of his note, and he'll pay it.'"

"What note? you usurious old rascal! I never gave you any," cried Tradescant.

"True," replied Shadrach, "but you gave a promissory note for two thousand to Messrs Gleek and Bragge, and they transferred it to me. Here it is. All regular, you see, and the note's due. I wouldn't press for payment, but as you're in cash, it can't be inconvenient."

"Well, I suppose I must pay," rejoined Tradescant. "Take your money," he added, snatching the note, and tearing it in pieces.

"I've a little matter to settle with you, captain," said the Jew, addressing Chatteris.

"With me?" exclaimed the captain, turning pale. "I hope my note for a thousand pounds to Major Pepper hasn't found its way to your hands?"

"Indeed but it has, captain," replied Shadrach. "I won't hurt your feelings by mentioning what I gave for it, but I shall be happy to exchange it for the bank-notes you've just put into your pocket."

"Zounds! won't you allow me a few hours' enjoyment of them, Shadrach? Present the note to-morrow, and I'll honour it."

"No time like the present, captain. To-morrow mightn't be convenient—so, if you please, we'll settle at once."

"Why, you're a footpad, Shadrach—only you use a bill instead of a pistol. Here's the money, and be hanged to you."

And he handed him the notes in exchange for the bill.

As soon as he had counted the money the Jew departed, with an exulting grin upon his sallow features. And the bank being broken, and play consequently at an end, most of the company quitted the room at the same time.

III.

THE ROOKS.

"Come," cried Wilkes, "we've had enough here. I move an adjournment to the Dilettanti Club."

"I'm with you," replied Tom Potter. "Won't you come, too, Lorimer?"

"I'll join you there in an hour," rejoined Tradescant. "I mean to try my luck at hazard. I feel sure of winning."

"You *won't* win if you play with Gleek and Bragge," said Tom Potter; "and I see they've just come in. I've already cautioned you against those two rooks, and I warn you against them once more."

"Oh! I've no reason to doubt them!" exclaimed Tradescant.

As they were talking, the two individuals alluded to by Potter approached. Both were showily dressed in laced coats and flowered silk waistcoats, and wore Ramilies periwigs, deep laced ruffles, and swords with silver hilts. But in spite of their gay attire there was something equivocal in their looks and manner that would not allow them to pass for gentlemen. Gleek was the younger of the two, and had a slight figure and pale features, lit up by quick, restless black eyes, and hands delicately white as those of a woman. Bragge was larger and coarser-looking, with blubber lips, an ace of club nose, and a copper colour. They were received with great haughtiness by all the party except Tradescant; and when Gleek addressed Sir William Stanhope, the latter turned contemptuously upon his heel.

"Don't presume to address me, sir," said Tom Potter to Bragge. "I have no acquaintance with you."

The bully was about to make an angry reply, but the resolute expression of the other's countenance checked him.

"If you won't come with us, Lorimer," pursued Potter, "don't neglect my caution." And he glanced so significantly at Bragge, that the latter exclaimed,

"Had that remark any reference to me, sir?"

"Apply it if you please, sir," replied Potter.

And with a contemptuous look he quitted the room with his friends. Captain Chatteris and the fat Leicestershire baronet, however, remained with Tradescant.

"He shall pay for this insolence," cried Bragge. "I'll cane him publicly in the Mall to-morrow."

"Soh, Mr Lorimer," cried Gleek, "I hear you've had rare luck at basset—broken the bank, eh? You'll empty our pockets next."

"I'll try, gentlemen—I'll try," replied Tradescant. "You've both won a good deal from me. It's only fair I should have my revenge."

"And we won't refuse it you," said Bragge. "Shall we begin with passage?"

"No, let us go at once to hazard," rejoined Tradescant.

"I'm ready," cried Bragge, taking a box from his pocket, and rattling the dice within it.

"No music like this, Mr Lorimer," cried Gleek, rattling a box in his turn.

"Here, sirrah," cried Tradescant to a drawer, "give me a box and dice, and another for Sir Theodosius."

"Not for me," said the Leicestershire baronet. "I'll look on and bet."

As soon as he was provided with the necessary implements for play, Tradescant proceeded to the table which the rooks had selected for the game. He was followed by Sir Theodosius and Chatteris.

Elated by his previous success, Tradescant made sure of winning, and was all eagerness to commence; and on the onset it seemed as if his expectations were about to be realized, for he made several lucky throws in succession, and won twenty pounds from each of his adversaries.

"Deuce take it! I can't think what ails the dice tonight," cried Gleek. "I've scarcely had a chance yet, and have'nt nicked the main once."

"I never threw worse," added Bragge. "All the luck is with Lorimer."

"Don't be daunted, gentlemen," cried Tradescant. "I'll play as long as you please, and for as much as you please. I should like to win a few hundreds from you."

"You shall win thousands if you can, Mr Lorimer," cried Bragge, putting a hundred pounds on the table. "I'm no flincher."

"Nor I," added Gleek, imitating his colleague's example.

"I'll bet ten guineas on your next cast, Lorimer," said Sir Theodosius.

"I'll take you, sir," replied Bragge.

"So will I," added Gleek, shaking his box. "Seven's the main!—ha! ames-ace!"

"Seven's the main!" cried Bragge, throwing. "Confusion! twelve!"

"Now for it," cried Tradescant, throwing in his turn. "Egad! I've nicked it—eleven." And he swept all the money from the board.

"We each owe you ten guineas," said the two rooks to Sir Theodosius.

"Let it stand, gentlemen," replied the Leicestershire baronet. "I shall go on backing Mr Lorimer."

For a few minutes longer uninterrupted good luck attended Tradescant. As the stakes were doubled after each successful cast, there was now a considerable sum on the table. All this time the proceedings of the rooks had been carefully watched by Candish, who, stationed behind Tradescant, perceived that they had dexterously contrived to change their dice.

"Seven's the main," cried Tradescant, "quatre-trey."

"Cinque deuce!" cried Bragge, throwing.

"Six ace!" cried Gleek, following him.

"The chances are equal. Another cast must decide it," cried Tradescant.

"Hold!" exclaimed Candish, "the chances are *not* equal. These dice are loaded," he added, covering those used by Gleek with his hand.

"And so are these," cried Herbert, snatching Bragge's dice from the table.

"How dare you make such a charge against a gentleman, sir?" cried Gleek, vainly attempting to push away Candish's hand.

"I say the dice are loaded," cried Candish, giving them to Tradescant. "Split them, and you will see."

"Fire and fury! No such indignity shall be offered to me," roared Gleek. "I'll have your heart's blood."

"Both dice are filled with quicksilver," cried Herbert, who had shattered them upon the hearth.

"And so are these," cried Tradescant, flinging them at Gleek's head. "You are a cheat and a villain, and your accomplice is no better."

"You now see how you've been imposed upon, sir," said Candish, "and what rogues you've had to deal with."

"I do! I do!" rejoined Tradescant.

"This is a well-contrived trick, but it won't pass," cried Gleek. "We're not to be plundered in this manner with impunity. Give up the money you've robbed us of, or you don't leave this room alive." And he drew his sword.

"What ho! there—without!" shouted Bragge, knocking the floor with a chair.

And in reply to the signal some half a dozen ruffians of villainous mien made their appearance at the doorway.

Sir Theodosius was now seriously alarmed.

"I must have been mad to come here," he cried. "We shall all be murdered. Help! help! watch! watch!"

"Hold your tongue, you silly old fool!" cried Bragge. "No harm shall be done you if you behave properly."

But the fat baronet rushed to the window, and tried to get it open. Darting after him, Bragge pulled him forcibly backwards, alarming him dreadfully. His cries brought Herbert to his assistance, who attacked Bragge in his turn. A general scuffle ensued. Swords were drawn on all sides, and passes exchanged—luckily without much effect. In the confusion chairs and card-tables were upset, and the candles and lamps rolled on the ground, burying all in darkness.

If the Leicestershire baronet had been alarmed before it was nothing to his present fright, and it must be owned that his fears were not unwarranted. However, he contrived to get to the window—which, as we have said, opened upon a balcony overlooking the river—and at last, to his great delight, succeeded in unfastening it. This accomplished, he rushed out upon the balcony, and clamoured lustily for help.

IV.

FIRE.

Meanwhile the conflict raged in the room, with what result could not be known, all being buried in darkness, and no one could tell whether he was engaged with friend or foe. All at once, above the din of strife, a watchman's rattle was heard, and a similar noise was repeated, proving that the Leicestershire baronet's outcries had given the alarm. At the same time, fresh apprehension was caused by the sudden bursting out of flames at the back of the room. Apparently, one of the lamps which had fallen on the floor before becoming extinguished had set fire to some curtains, and these now blazed up. At this new danger the combat instantly ceased; the curtains were torn down, and prompt measures taken to check the progress of the fire. In vain: other combustible materials had caught, and the house being built of timber, now old and dry, it burnt with such rapidity as to threaten its speedy destruction.

The moment the fire broke out, the two rooks, who seemed fully alive to the danger of the situation, beat a hasty retreat, dashed down the staircase, and got out of the house. They were quickly followed by the rest of their associates, and in another moment only Tradescant and Chatteris, with Herbert and Candish, were left in the room.

"We must away too," cried Herbert. "It won't be safe to remain here longer. The fire is gaining rapidly."

"Where's Sir Theodosius?" inquired Tradescant.

"Here," replied the baronet, putting his head, from which the wig was gone, through the window. "Is the fight over?—are the villains gone? Bless my life, what a fire!"

"Yes, yes, you'll be burnt to death if you stay here," cried Candish. "Don't lose a moment, if you value your life. Come along!"

The whole party were then about to hurry down-stairs, when they were stopped by a posse of watchmen and constables — mustering some ten or a dozen men — bearing lanterns, and armed with staves and truncheons.

"Here are some of the villains left," cried the foremost watchman; "the others have given us the slip, but we'll make sure of these. You are our prisoners, masters. Resistance will be useless, so I advise you not to attempt it. Come along with us quietly to the watch-house in Bread-street. You'll have to give an account of yourselves to the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House to-morrow morning."

"'Sdeath! that mustn't be," exclaimed Tradescant. "Here are five guineas for you, my good fellows. Let us pass."

"Well, come down-stairs, and we'll talk about it," rejoined the watchman.

"Don't go with them," whispered Chatteris; "they'll play us some cursed trick. The window's open; it will be easy to drop from the balcony to the ground."

No sooner was the hint given than it was acted on. A rush was made by the party towards the window. Of course the watchmen followed, but they were held in check by Herbert and Tradescant, who opposed them with their drawn swords. As the fire was now burning fiercely, and the watchmen suffered from the heat, they determined to bring the matter to a speedy issue, and dealt some heavy blows against the young men, which the latter with difficulty warded off.

"Make good your retreat," said Herbert to his cousin. "It won't do for you to be captured."

"Yes, go," added Candish; "I'll take your place."

Thus urged, the young man sprang through the window. On gaining the balcony, he found that Chatteris had already disappeared, but Sir Theodosius was still there, clinging desperately to the rails of the balcony, but not daring to let himself drop. Tradescant instantly flew to his assistance, and with the help of Chatteris, who was standing below, managed to effect the stout baronet's safe descent. This accomplished, he himself descended. At the same juncture, a wherry approached the shore, and the liberal fare offered by Tradescant soon induced the two watermen who rowed it to take all three on board.

"Stand out a few yards from shore," said Tradescant; "we must wait for our friends."

"Werry good, your honour," replied one of the watermen, a crafty old fellow; "if you'll only pay us well, we'll do whatsomever you axes."

Accordingly, they pulled out some twenty or thirty yards, and then remained stationary opposite the burning house. But though an anxious look-out was kept, nothing could be seen of Herbert or Candish. Indeed, a loud shout proceeding from the house seemed to proclaim that they had fallen into the hands of the watchmen, while a few minutes afterwards, flames bursting through the windows made it evident that the room was untenantable, or that any rash individuals lingering within it were doomed to destruction. Still, though aware they could render no further aid, the party in the boat tarried to gaze at the blazing building, which now formed a very striking spectacle.

But let us now see what had befallen Herbert and Candish. Endowed with remarkable activity, there is no doubt that, if left to himself, Herbert could easily have escaped from the watch. But he would not leave Candish, and it was while gallantly struggling to rescue the old man, whose sword had been beaten from his grasp, and who was being dragged off by his captors, that he himself was overpowered.

Both their prisoners being thus secured, the watchmen gave the shout heard by those on the water, and then hurried down-stairs as expeditiously as they could. It was time. Had they remained another minute, not one of them would have quitted the place alive. The whole of the roof had caught fire, and some of the blazing rafters fell in, filling the room with flame and smoke. By this time a great number of suspicious-looking persons were collected in the narrow street or alley at the back of the ordinary, and it required considerable exertions on the part of the constables and the watch to prevent them from plundering the house under pretence of rendering assistance. All that could be saved was removed from the premises as quickly as possible, and the alley was partially blocked up with goods and furniture.

By this time an engine had been brought from Queenhithe, but owing to the confined situation of the premises great difficulty was experienced in causing it to play upon the burning structure. Another engine, set upon a barge, was also brought on the river side of the house, and this was far more efficient, but the conflagration had now made far too great progress to be checked, and the utmost that could be done was to endeavour to save the adjoining habitations by throwing a constant jet of water upon them.

The spectacle as witnessed by those within the boat, who still remained looking on, was now exceedingly grand. The night being profoundly dark and perfectly calm, full effect was given to the fire. The habitation, as we have already said, being composed of old and dry timber, was rapidly consumed. The fire burnt with great fierceness, the flames springing to a vast height, illuminating not only the densely-packed intervening buildings in Thames-street, Paul's-chain, and Doctors'-commons, but the massive structure of St Paul's itself, which was now displayed as clearly as in broad daylight; and casting a stream of radiance across the darkling current. The jagged buildings on the banks of the river looking black and indistinct, had a very picturesque effect. Many other wherries besides that occupied by Tradescant and his friends were there, and others were momentarily arriving, or hastening to the spot. Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, the Southwark side of the river, facing the conflagration, was crowded with spectators, while London Bridge, and, indeed, every other place commanding a view, had some occupant. Owing to the crowded state of the street at the rear, and the confusion prevailing in it, the watchmen did not immediately convey their prisoners to the watch-house, but took them to an adjoining tavern, known as the Horse-shoe and Magpie.

V.

AN HOUR'S DURANCE.

Here they were introduced to a small room adjoining the bar, and a watchman left in charge of them.

"Now make yourselves comfortable, gem'men," said this worthy, setting his lantern on the table. "Call for anything you likes. I'm agreeable. In case you don't know it, I may tell you the Hoss-shoe's a famous house for punch, and you'll have plenty of time to drink a bowl, for you'll be here an hour or better, I dare say. There's no liquor allowed in the watch-house."

"I want nothing to drink," cried Herbert, seating himself on one of the rush-bottomed chairs with which the room was furnished.

"Nor I," said Candish. "But order something for yourself, my good fellow," he added, tossing the Charley a crown piece.

"Ah! I see, your honour understands business," the watchman replied, taking the money. And opening the door, he called for a quartern of gin, with a pipe and tobacco, all of which were brought him by a drawer. Thus provided, he sat down, and after sipping the gin, which he pronounced a perfect cordial, proceeded to light his pipe. While doing this, he made another effort to induce his prisoners to follow his example, but without success. Neither, though the watchman himself was disposed to be talkative, did they appear inclined for conversation. So, finding he got no reply to his remarks, the guardian of the night voted his companions dull fellows, and smoked his pipe in silence. Both Herbert and Candish had dropped off into a doze, when they were suddenly roused by a knocking at the door, which had been locked inside by the watchman.

"Open quick!" cried a voice outside. "It's me, Ned Finch. Here's the devil to pay."

"What's the matter?" cried the watchman, getting up and unlocking the door.

"You would soon have found out what's the matter, and to your cost, Corny Cloyde, if I hadn't come to warn you," replied his brother watchman. "The Lord Mayor is coming to see the prisoners."

"The Lord Mayor! impossible, Ned," rejoined Corny.

"You'll find it quite true," said Finch. "His lordship came down to see that due precautions were taken to put out the fire and prevent it from spreading, and while questioning the men as to the cause of the occurrence, heard about the prisoners, and being informed they had been taken to the Hoss-shoe, said he'd go see 'em. So I ran on to tell you. There!" he added, triumphantly, "you didn't believe me. His lordship's at the door now."

"I'm ready for him," rejoined Corny, thrusting his pipe into his pocket, and hastily hiding the measure of gin and the glass under the table.

This hurried dialogue, as may be supposed, was not lost upon the prisoners, and was satisfactory, inasmuch as it held out a prospect of speedy release. A loud clamour and shuffling of feet now announced that several persons had entered the outer room. Presently the noise ceased, and a voice, easily recognized by both his auditors as that of Sir Gresham Lorimer, was heard inquiring about the prisoners.

Then steps approached the door, and in another moment the Lord Mayor was seen standing at it, attended by the host and hostess, both bearing lights. Behind him were a couple of beadles, with a posse of constables and watchmen.

"Here are the prisoners, an please your honourable lordship," said Corny, advancing towards him, and inclining his person. "Both desperate characters—notorious sharpers."

"Sharpers, eh!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "I'm glad you've caught them. A stop must be put to these practices. If Picard's ordinary had not been burnt down I would have inflicted upon him the full penalty of two hundred pounds for keeping a gaming-table. But these rogues shall be fined, and give ample securities for their future good conduct. I won't let them loose to prey upon society again."

"Your lordship is quite right," said the landlord. "You can't be too severe upon these cheating gamesters. Picard's ordinary has been a great nuisance to the neighbourhood, and it's a blessing it's burnt down."

"Stand aside and let me look at them," said the Lord Mayor to Corny. "What do I see?" he exclaimed, in the utmost surprise. "You have made some stupid mistake, fellow. I thought you had caught those too sharpers, Gleek and Bragge. These persons are not gamesters."

"Oh yes, begging your honourable lordship's pardon, they are," replied Corny, "arrant gamesters. We took 'em in the fact. Let 'em be searched, and I'll lay my life dice and cards will be found in their pockets."

"Search us," cried Herbert, "and if it should prove as this fellow states, let the severest punishment be inflicted upon us."

"How came you at this gaming-house, for I presume you cannot deny having been there?" asked the Lord Mayor.

"We were both there, but not with the intention of playing," replied Herbert.

"His lordship wouldn't believe that if you were on your oath," cried Corny. "One of their associates won several thousand pounds, and broke the bank."

"Is this correct?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"The man is right in stating that the bank was broken," replied Herbert.

"By whom?"

"Your lordship must excuse me if I decline to answer the question."

"I can easily find it out for your lordship," cried Corny, "Ned Finch heard the rascal's name. It was something like your lordship's own. Ah! there's Ned himself. Tell his lordship who it was that broke the bank."

"I didn't catch the name," replied Ned, evasively, "but I should know the gentleman again if I clapped eyes upon him. He is a very fine young man."

"We should have captured him if it hadn't been for these two," said Corny. "They kept us at bay with their swords while the others got off."

"No one, I hope, was hurt?" inquired the Lord Mayor, anxiously.

"A few scratches, that was all, my lord. Our opponents got as good as they gave. There was one fat old fellow with them who lost his wig, and got a knock or two. But no one was much hurt."

"That's well," said the Lord Mayor.

"I can prove, my lord, if needful," said Candish, "that I was present with a laudable design, and that this young gentleman merely went with me to enable me to carry it out. He neither played nor intended to play. Our object was to expose the tricks of the two sharpers your lordship has referred to, and in this we completely succeeded. We were fortunately able to open the eyes of one who has for some time been their dupe."

"Your statement carries conviction with it, and I therefore think it needless to pursue the inquiry further," said the Lord Mayor. "You are both discharged, and I am sorry you have been at all detained."

"Oh! that is not of the slightest consequence, my lord," said Candish. "We are too well satisfied with what we have accomplished to heed an hour's detention. But we may congratulate ourselves that your lordship was brought hither by the fire, or we must have passed the night in the watch-house."

"And have been brought before me in the justice court of the Mansion House to-morrow," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "You have had an escape certainly, and I'm exceedingly glad of it. Hark ye, my good fellows," he added to the constables, "those two sharpers, Gleek and Bragge, mustn't be allowed to escape. Ferret them out. I rely on their capture, d'ye hear? Now follow me, gentlemen, and I'll see you safely through the crowd outside."

With this he quitted the house, while Herbert and Candish, acting upon his suggestion, kept close behind him, and being surrounded by the constables, passed without hindrance or molestation through the noisy mob, and ultimately found their way to the house in Cheapside just as Sir Gresham had entered it.

It was late enough then, being past two o'clock, but Bow Church clock struck four before Tradescant was lighted to his chamber by Tiplady.

VI.

CHAT AT BREAKFAST.

NEXT morning the Lord Mayor, having previously sent Tomline to apprize Millicent and Prue that he would breakfast with them in their own room, made his appearance about nine o'clock, and found all ready for him.

Both girls were dressed with a simplicity that was especially agreeable to Sir Gresham, and he could not help thinking how much better they looked in their plain, neat attire, with their luxuriant tresses free from powder and pomatum, their complexions fresh and clear, and such as Nature had given them, than his eldest daughters in their rich silks and satins, and with their artificially heightened charms. Their smiling countenances and eyes beaming with pleasure evinced their satisfaction at seeing him.

After an affectionate greeting had passed between them, Millicent said, in tones that bespoke her delight, "Well, this is really very kind of you, papa, to bestow a little of your valuable time upon us. You cannot conceive how pleased we both were to receive your message by Tomline."

"Yes, indeed, uncle," added Prue. "You have made us happy for the day. We did not see you yesterday, and I almost feared we might suffer a similar deprivation to-day."

"Neither would you have seen me, my dear, unless I had come now," rejoined Sir Gresham, smiling, "for my time is so much engrossed by my official duties and by engagements of one kind or another that I have scarcely a moment to myself. A Lord Mayor has so many demands upon him that he has little to bestow on his own family. After eleven o'clock I belong to the public. You must not be surprised, therefore, if I should now and then come and breakfast with you."

"Surprised, papa!" exclaimed Milly. "We shall be enchanted. You cannot come too often—that is, if mamma can spare you."

"Why, to tell you the truth," said Sir Gresham, smiling, "I was rather anxious to escape a tête-à-tête with her ladyship."

"Oh! now you are spoiling all, uncle," cried Prue. "You won't allow us to flatter ourselves that you come to see us. However, we'll do our best to be agreeable to you, and hope we may induce you to repeat the visit."

On this they all sat down to the breakfast-table, where the honours were done in a very charming manner by Milly. Tea was already made, and chocolate—Sir Gresham's customary beverage—was brought in, hot and foaming, by a page. There were patés, cold chickens, ham and tongue, and plenty of other good things upon a side table.

"You know I like a substantial breakfast, Milly," said the Lord Mayor, helping himself to some Yorkshire pie, "and have provided accordingly."

"It is your own breakfast, papa," replied Milly. "On receiving your message, I ordered it to be brought up here. You must not suppose that Prue and I feast in this manner. Very little contents us, I assure you."

"There you are wrong, my dear. Always lay in a good foundation for the day. This is an excellent pie. Can't I prevail upon you to taste it, Prue?"

"No thank you, uncle. I never touch meat in a morning."

"Then you're not the girl I took you for," cried Sir Gresham. "You must improve your habits, and follow my example. You prefer cakes, sweetmeats, honey, marmalade, and all such trash, I suppose, to good, solid, wholesome food. Milly is just as absurd. She eats nothing—absolutely nothing."

"Oh! don't say so, papa. I'm sure I've an excellent appetite. Mamma often says I eat too much."

"Does she?" cried Sir Gresham. "Then she doesn't apply the same rule to herself, that's all I can say. If she had tasted this pie, for instance, she would most assuredly have come again—and quite right too. Speaking of your aunt, Prue—have you seen much of her since your stay here?"

"Not a great deal, uncle," she replied. "Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris were here yesterday, and I fancy they have no great affection for me."

"I fear not," said Sir Gresham; "but never mind."

"Yes, I told Prue not to mind," said Milly. "It's my sisters' way. They are often very cold and haughty to me, but I'm used to it, and don't heed it."

"Well, Milly and I must try to make amends for the sorry treatment you experience from the others," said Sir Gresham. "We shall remove to the Mansion House in a day or so, and then you can either stay here with Herbert, or go with us, as you like best."

"Oh, Prue will go with us, I'm sure," cried Milly. "I can't spare her."

"If my aunt wouldn't think me in the way, I should like of all things to stay at the Mansion House," said Prue. "It's quite a palace, I'm told—much finer than Guildhall."

"Quite a different thing, child. The one is an ancient edifice; the other modern. The Mansion House has only just been built—that is to say, it was finished eight years ago. But it is very magnificent, no doubt, and you'll be lodged like a princess while you stay there."

"Then you are resolved to take me, uncle—but if my aunt should say no?"

"The Lord Mayor is omnipotent in the City, my dear. What he wills is law."

"Very well, uncle, you shan't find me rebellious or contumacious. What you tell me to do I shall do."

"Then I'll tell you what you must do, my dear. You must see her ladyship's milliner, Mrs Grogram, to-day, and direct her to make you a set of dresses suitable to the Mansion House entertainments—similar to those she is making for Milly."

"Oh, you are much too good, uncle."

"Then you must have shoes, gloves, hats, fans, ornaments, trinkets—all that a fine lady can require—all that my niece should wear. Milly will tell you what you want."

"I scarcely know myself, papa. But I dare say we shall easily find out."

"All I desire is that you should be fully equipped, and without loss of time," said Sir Gresham. "So see to it, girl, see to it. If there should be any mistake, Milly must bear the blame."

"I, papa—why so?"

"Because I expect you to see my directions implicitly fulfilled. I don't require you to look after Herbert—"

"Oh no, papa, I should hope not."

"But you must see him handsomely dressed. I don't want him, though, to become a fop, like Tradescant."

"Hadn't you better send your own tailor to him, papa?"

"I mean to do so. But you must give him the advantage of your taste."

"My opinion is worth nothing," said Prue; "but it seems to me that my cousin Tradescant dresses with much elegance."

"Pshaw!—a puppy—a coxcomb, who thinks of nothing but adorning his person, and spending his time in frivolous amusements. I am wofully disappointed in my son, niece. I looked for something better, after all that has been done for him."

"You must make some allowances for Tradescant, uncle. He has been exposed to a great many temptations, and it is not surprising if he should have yielded to some of them."

"A great deal a girl like you, Prue, brought up in the country, can know about it," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "Tradescant's conduct is not to be defended. What new whim do you think he has got in his foolish head? Nay, you'll never guess, so I may as well tell you. He wants to get married."

"Married!" exclaimed both girls together.

"And you'll be still more surprised when you learn who is the object of his choice."

"I hope she is some one whom you can approve, uncle," rejoined Prue, turning pale.

"Hum! not altogether. The girl is pretty, but coquettish and frivolous, and not the sort of person I should have desired for my son's wife. However, you have seen her, and can judge. She was at Guildhall the other night, and danced with Herbert."

"Herbert only danced with Alice Walworth—he told us so himself," said Milly. "She can't be the person."

"Why she disappeared from the ball, as we were told, in a very mysterious manner," cried Prue. "It can't possibly be Alice."

"You are both wrong, for Alice it is," replied Sir Gresham. "As to the disappearance, it turns out to have been a mere trick played upon Herbert by Tradescant, to which the girl must have been a party, but she never left the Hall. However, it was a very silly proceeding, and reflects little credit upon either of them. In my opinion, Herbert has been very badly used, for certainly the girl seemed much pleased with him."

"As was natural, after the great service he had rendered her," cried Milly. "I cannot understand how she can have changed so suddenly."

"She is a coquette, and has no real regard for either," replied the Lord Mayor. "Herbert pleased her well enough till Tradescant presented himself, when, dazzled by the false glitter of the latter, she at once gave him the preference. This is your hopeful cousin's present plan of reform, Prue. What think you of it?"

"I trust it may conduce to his happiness," she rejoined; "but I don't think she is good enough for him."

"There I differ with you, niece. I think her a great deal too good to be thrown away on such a worthless fellow."

"Oh, uncle! I'm sorry to hear you speak thus disparagingly of your son. It is not like you to be uncharitable and unforgiving."

"I hope I am neither, niece; and if I perceive any signs of amendment in Tradescant I shall be the first to hail them, but I discern none as yet."

"Then you don't think this marriage will accomplish mnch?"

"I have no great hopes of it, I confess."

"Then why allow it to take place, uncle?"

"I may have little to do with it. Tradescant is very wilful, and may set my authority at defiance."

"I cannot believe this of him," said Prue.

"Well, time will show," replied the Lord Mayor.

At this moment Tomline entered the room, and said, "Sir Felix Bland and Mr Walworth are below, and desire to see your lordship."

"Say I'll wait upon them immediately," replied Sir Gresham. "I suppose you can guess Mr Walworth's errand?" he added, as soon as the man was gone. "He has come to talk over the marriage."

"I shall be very anxious to hear the result of the interview," said Milly.

"You'll hear something that will surprise you in the course of the morning. Good-bye to you both!" said her father, quitting the room.

"Oh, Milly!" exclaimed Prue, as soon as they were alone together—"oh, Milly!" she sobbed, giving way to the emotion with which she had been struggling, and bursting into tears, "I can't bear the thoughts of this marriage. I hope it won't take place. And yet what business have I to wish so? Tradescant has probably never given a thought to me, and never might have done. Alice is very pretty—and may bring him a large dowry—and they may be very happy together—but I d-o-o-n't—th-th-ink—they will."

"I hope they mayn't have the chance," replied Milly; "but we must wait papa's decision—though, after all, Tradescant mayn't choose to be guided by it. Cheer up, dear Prue. Our dreams may yet be realized."

"Mine have been very foolish," replied Prue; "but they are over now."

VII.

HOW THE MATRIMONIAL PROJECT CAME TO AN END.

The Lord Mayor found both the gentlemen who had been announced to him, in the drawing-room, and after shaking hands with them very heartily, expressing his pleasure at seeing them, and offering them chairs, begged to know the object of their visit, looking at Mr Walworth as he made the inquiry.

The old hosier, who was dressed in his best, and wore a well-powdered bob-major and a fine muslin cravat, was visibly embarrassed, and after making an ineffectual attempt to open the business, and getting very red in the face, applied to the little alderman.

"Do me the favour to explain the matter to his lordship, Sir Felix," he said. "I can't get on at all."

"With the greatest pleasure in life, my dear Mr Walworth," replied Sir Felix. Then rising, and bowing to the Lord Mayor, he thus addressed him: "It is my happy privilege to communicate to your lordship—though, possibly, you may be already aware of the fact—that your son, Mr Tradescant Lorimer, captivated, as well he might be, by the charms of my friend Mr Walworth's lovely daughter—an only child, allow me to observe—and considering her in all respects, personally, mentally, and pecuniarily, calculated to make him happy—persuading himself also, and not improperly, as the event showed, that he had succeeded in gaining the affections of the beauteous Alice, made her an offer of his hand. Coming from a person of Mr Lorimer's figure and breeding—of so much promise and of such brilliant prospects—the only son of a distinguished and wealthy father—in a word, coming from *your* son, Sir Gresham, the offer could not be otherwise than gratifying to Mr Walworth. And so that gentleman felt it. In a manner which did credit to his judgment and feelings, he at once evinced his high sense of the value of the connection by volunteering to give his daughter a magnificent dowry—a dowry which a nobleman would not despise. I have only to add that my good friend Mr Walworth, entertaining the profoundest respect for your lordship, and finding you had not been consulted on the point, would allow no engagement to be entered into till your sanction should be obtained; and it is with the view of ascertaining your lordship's feelings on the subject that he has sought the present interview. Permit me to add, on my own part, that I cannot conceive a couple better suited to each other than these two amiable young persons, alike graced by nature, alike rich in all the ingredients essential to conjugal felicity, and alike fortunate in the possession of parents opulent and liberal. No difficulties, as it seems to me, can exist in the way of a union so desirable on both sides, and it will always be satisfactory to me to reflect that I have been instrumental—in however slight a degree—in bringing it about."

"I'm a man of few words, Sir Gresham," said Mr Walworth, as the little alderman sat down, evidently very well satisfied with his florid oration, "and cannot express myself in such eloquent terms as those employed by my good friend Sir Felix. But I will try to speak to the point. I have had no hand in this matrimonial scheme, my lord, neither has my wife. The thing has come about quite suddenly and unexpectedly. The young folks settled it between 'em—

apparently without much ado—and then came to me. Well, it would be useless to deny that the match was agreeable to me, so I at once consented—on the understanding, however, that there should be no positive engagement till your lordship had been consulted; and that's what I came about this morning."

"You have acted in a very straightforward manner, Mr Walworth," rejoined Sir Gresham, "and I am greatly beholden to you."

"And now a word as to my daughter's fortune, my lord. Sir Felix has been pleased to assert that I mean to give her a magnificent dowry. That's saying too much."

"Excuse me, my dear sir, I don't think so," interposed the little alderman; "neither, I am convinced, will the Lord Mayor think so, when acquainted with the amount."

"If Alice marries with my consent and approval, as she will if she marries your son, my lord," said Walworth, "I mean to give her a plum."

"There!—was I wrong, my lord!" cried Sir Felix. "Isn't that magnificent? Your son has got a prize such as falls to the lot of few—a lovely girl with a hundred thousand pounds. Egad! it's very well some of those gay young fortune-hunters didn't know this t'other night, Mr Walworth, or Alice might have been run away with in right earnest."

"If she *had* run away, the rascal who induced her to take such an imprudent step would have profited little by it, Sir Felix. He should never have had a shilling from me I hate a fortune-hunter."

"Agreed, my dear Mr Walworth. If there's one character more odious and contemptible than another, it is a fortune-hunter."

"Yes, it's very bad; but when the fortune-hunter is a rake and a gambler into the bargain, as is not unfrequently the case, he's a far worse character."

"Far worse, sir, I agree with you," said the Lord Mayor.

"But we mustn't stigmatize all young men of ton as rakes and gamblers because they play a little now and then, and divert themselves at Ranelagh and the masquerades," said Sir Felix. "Nobody thinks the worse of them for doing so."

"But I do," replied Walworth, stoutly. "I object to a rake or a gambler, and I won't have such a one for a son-in-law. I feel safe with Mr Tradescant Lorimer, assured that with such an example before his eyes as is offered by his respected father, he cannot fail to be steady."

"An old fool!" mentally ejaculated Sir Felix, laughing in his sleeve. "'Twould be a pity to undeceive him."

"Sir Felix, will you allow me a word with Mr Walworth?" said Sir Gresham.

"I don't like leaving them together," thought Sir Felix, alarmed at the Lord Mayor's manner. "But there's no help for it. I must go. Certainly, my lord—certainly," he added, aloud. Then whispering, "Of course your lordship will close with him. Capital match for Tradescant. A plum isn't to be picked up every day, even in the City—ha! ha!" And bowing to both gentlemen, he retired to the farther end of the room.

"Mr Walworth," said Sir Gresham, in a calm and serious tone, "before proceeding further, it will be necessary that we should come to a clear understanding. I share in the opinions you have expressed as to the character and qualifications of the person to whom you may be disposed to give your daughter in marriage. Let me ask you, sir, whether you know much of my son, and whether—judging from what you do know—you think he comes up to your standard?"

"Since you put it to me so directly, Sir Gresham," replied Walworth, "I must own that I know little of him save by report, and that is highly favourable. But, indeed, I have not deemed it necessary to make any inquiries, as I feel perfectly satisfied that, with such a model before him, the young gentleman could not go far wrong."

"I am obliged by your good opinion, sir. But in a matter of so much importance as your daughter's happiness, it is your bounden duty—excuse me for saying so—to make careful inquiries, and till this has been done, a meeting like the present is premature."

"But I repeat, Sir Gresham, that I am perfectly satisfied, and should consider it an insult to you to make any inquiries about your son."

"If you had done so, sir, you would have spared me much pain. You now compel me, very reluctantly, to give you information which you ought to have obtained elsewhere."

"How, Sir Gresham?" cried Walworth, looking very much perplexed.

"In no transaction in life, Mr Walworth, have I intentionally deceived any one with whom I have had dealings, and I shall not begin now. Whatever pain it costs me to make the avowal, I shall not hesitate. You say you object to a rake and a gambler. I grieve to say, sir, my son is both."

"You amaze me, Sir Gresham!" cried Walworth, petrified. "Had I heard this from any other lips than your own, I should not have believed it."

"I would rather you had learnt it from others than from me, sir, but, as an honest man, I am bound to speak truth, even to my own detriment. What is more, Mr Walworth, I fear my son cannot escape the imputation of being mercenary in his proposal; for, unless I am much mistaken, your daughter's expected fortune, rather than her beauty and merits, constitutes her chief attraction with him."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" groaned Walworth. "One should never judge by appearances. But perhaps I spoke rather too strongly just now. I could never have supposed—"

"Make no apologies, my dear Mr Walworth. What you said was perfectly right and proper, and showed you have your daughter's happiness and welfare really at heart. My own experience convinces me that the utmost caution ought to be exercised in the choice of a son-in-law, and that it is better—far better—a girl should remain single all her days than marry a man of indifferent character."

"No doubt of it, Sir Gresham," responded Walworth, dolefully. "But I fear I shan't get Alice and her mother to agree with me. I needn't say it would have been a pride and a pleasure to me to be connected with you, but after what you have said, the engagement cannot take place."

"I don't think either party will suffer much, sir," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "They have not had time to form a strong attachment to each other. It must have been mere caprice on your daughter's part, and I have told you frankly what I believe to have been my son's motives in making the proposal. If the circumstances had been different, and I had approved of the match, I should have required that the young people should know more of each other before an engagement was entered into."

"Your lordship is quite right," said Walworth; "the matter has been arranged without due consideration, and is very properly brought to an end. I much regret that I have inadvertently caused you pain; but I can assure you that the respect I have hitherto entertained for you will not be diminished by this interview."

"Ahem!" coughed Sir Felix, from the other end of the room. "All settled, eh?"

"All settled," replied the Lord Mayor.

"Delighted to hear it," cried the little alderman, hurrying towards them. "But how's this? You both look very grave."

"The negotiation is at an end," replied the Lord Mayor.

"At an end!" exclaimed Sir Felix, starting back in dismay. "Bless me! I hope not. But what has occurred to interrupt so desirable an arrangement? Can't it be set right?"

"I fear not," replied the Lord Mayor. "Mr Walworth has thought better of his proposition."

"Not retreated from his offer, surely," cried Sir Felix. "As a man of his word, he can't do that. No! no! we must have the plum."

The old hosier winked at the Lord Mayor.

"I've changed my mind, Sir Felix," he observed. "It shan't be said that Alice was married merely for her money."

"But, my dear sir, it's too late to change your mind. You must abide by your offer."

"If Mr Tradescant Lorimer really loves my daughter, he'll take her without a fortune," observed Walworth; "I won't hold out a bribe."

"Oh! that's it, eh?" thought Sir Felix—"he has got alarmed. No one can be more disinterested than Tradescant; but after your promise he will naturally expect—"

"I can't help what he expects," interrupted Walworth. "I don't mean to give it."

Just as the words were uttered the door was opened, and the young gentleman in question burst into the room.

"Ah! here he comes," cried Sir Felix. "We shall see what he says to the change."

"I'll put him to the proof by carrying on the deception a little longer," muttered Walworth.

"Good morning, Mr Walworth," said Tradescant. "I heard you were here, and came down as quickly as I could to see you. All satisfactorily arranged, I trust?"

"Not quite, sir," replied the old hosier.

"There's a slight hitch, I am sorry to say," remarked Sir Felix, "owing to Mr Walworth's declining to give his daughter the fortune he promised her."

"Is it possible?" cried Tradescant.

"Perfectly true," replied Walworth. "My daughter shan't be a catch for a fortune-hunter."

"A fortune-hunter, Mr Walworth! I cannot allow such an injurious term to be applied to me. My attachment to Alice is purely disinterested—"

"I said so—I said so," interrupted Sir Felix—"purely disinterested."

"Then it cannot matter that I have seen fit to withdraw my offer."

"Pardon me, sir, but it *does* matter," cried Tradescant. "You won't, I am sure, behave so unhandsomely."

"Unhandsome or not, I've made up my mind not to give her a fortune," rejoined Walworth. "But if you regard Alice merely for herself, and not for what she is to bring you, that won't signify."

"But it *does* signify most materially, Mr Walworth," exclaimed Tradescant, angrily. "Allow me to observe, that I consider this very extraordinary conduct on your part, sir. If you have made up your mind not to give Alice a fortune, I have made up mine not to marry her without one."

"I suspected as much," said Walworth. "Very disinterested affection indeed!"

"You must be labouring under a most singular delusion, Mr Walworth," pursued Tradescant, "if you can for an instant suppose that a person of my figure and pretensions would throw himself away upon any woman."

"D'ye hear that, Mr Walworth?" observed Sir Felix. "If you want such a son-in-law as Mr Lorimer, you must pay for him."

"So it seems," rejoined the old hosier.

"Your daughter's a very charming girl, and might tempt me to commit a folly, but I can't afford to marry for love," said Tradescant. "I've a few debts, which the plum you were good enough to promise me would enable me to discharge."

"Faith, the son's as frank in his own way as the father," thought Walworth.

"What says Sir Gresham?" inquired Sir Felix. "We have not had his opinion."

"I think Mr Walworth quite right," he replied. "I should give nothing were I in his place, and therefore I can ask him for nothing."

Here the door was thrown open by a couple of lacqueys in state liveries to admit the Lady Mayoress and a party with her. Her ladyship, who was very richly dressed, and looked all smiles [and affability, was accompanied by Mrs Walworth, to whom she was evidently playing the agreeable. Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris followed with Alice, the young lady looking enchanted by the extraordinary attentions lavished upon her.

VIII.

WOMEN OF THE WORLD.

Many circumstances conspired to make Lady Lorimer desirous that her son should marry. If he could find a wife with rank as well as money so much the better—but money was indispensable. In Alice's case one was provided to his hand, who, though she might lack some things, had the grand requisite.

On the previous evening, after their promenade in the City Mall, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris had proceeded at once to Cheapside to convey to their mother the surprising intelligence that Tradescant had made a proposal of marriage to Alice Walworth, and that the young lady's father had promised to give her a plum. The latter announcement dispelled any objections that Lady Lorimer might have raised to the match. Hitherto, the Walworths had appeared in her eyes low and vulgar people, with whom it was scarcely possible to associate. Now she began to see merits in them which she could not discern before. Old Walworth was stupid and had a bad manner, but then he was a nonentity, and his wife was rather an agreeable woman. If they proved objectionable, it would be easy to drop them, after the marriage. Alice was decidedly pretty, and, as Mrs Tradescant Lorimer, would no doubt be greatly admired. Clearly, she was a prize that must not be allowed to slip through her son's fingers. Thus Lady Lorimer argued, and her daughters entirely agreed with her in opinion.

"You must carry this marriage through, mamma," observed Lady Dawes. "It is of the last importance to Tradescant."

"I see its importance as well as you, dearest Livy," replied the Lord Mayoress; "and it shan't fall through if I can prevent it. I dare say we shall have some difficulty with your papa—but so we had about your own marriage with Sir John Dawes—yet I managed *that*."

"Heigho!" exclaimed Lady Dawes.

"Wherefore that sigh?" inquired her mother. "Surely you don't regret that splendid match."

"Oh no, mamma; though perhaps I might have been happier if—however, we won't talk of that. Let us keep to Tradescant's affair. Mr Walworth is coming here to-morrow morning to see papa before he goes to the Mansion House, and talk the matter over, and I have begged Mrs Walworth and Alice to come too, promising to meet them. I needn't ask you to give them a gracious reception."

"They shall have nothing to complain of—but I'm glad you prepared me," replied the Lady Mayoress. "To-morrow the engagement must be concluded. But I won't say a word about it in the interim to Sir Gresham. He's so angry at present with Tradescant that he won't listen to reason. But this marriage will set all right."

"I fear nothing will be done for my poor Tom," observed Mrs Chatteris, with a sigh.

"We must get this important matter settled first, and then we'll think of Tom," replied her mother.

On the following morning, as agreed, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris came betimes to meet Alice and her mother, and shortly afterwards the expected guests arrived.

While Mr Walworth and Sir Felix were shown into the drawing-room, Mrs Walworth and her daughter were ushered into Lady Lorimer's boudoir, where all three ladies were waiting to receive them, and where a very sentimental scene was enacted. On Alice's appearance, Lady Lorimer hurried towards her, clasped her to her bosom with effusion, shed tears over her, and called her her daughter.

Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris were equally profuse in their manifestations of affection. Assuring Alice with apparent sincerity that they should be delighted to have her for a sister, they declared that Tradescant's choice could have fallen on no one more agreeable to them than herself.

To Mrs Walworth all three were exceedingly courteous, and though she was a little awed at first, they soon set her completely at her ease. Mrs Walworth, who had heard the Lady Mayoress and her married daughters described as exceedingly haughty, thought they had been entirely misrepresented, and that they were the most amiable, unassuming people imaginable. In short, the interview was perfectly satisfactory. Alice and her mother were pleased; and Lady Lorimer and her daughters were pleased—because their object was accomplished.

After a while the Lady Mayoress proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, to see whether the gentlemen had concluded the arrangement, and accordingly they all proceeded thither.

IX.

SMOOTH SPEAKING AND PLAIN SPEAKING.

All the ladies were too much occupied with what was passing in their own minds to notice the discomposure of the gentlemen; or if they did notice it at all, they were far from attributing it to the right cause. True to his character for politeness, Sir Felix flew to the Lady Mayoress on her entrance, and, in his usual honeyed phrases, expressed his delight at beholding her. To Alice's great surprise, however, Tradescant did not advance, but remained standing where he was, as if unconscious of her presence. Mr Walworth likewise was greatly embarrassed, and his perplexity was increased when the Lady Mayoress, as soon as she could liberate herself from Sir Felix, went up to him, and said, "I must shake hands with you, Mr Walworth. I must tell you how handsomely—how generously—how nobly you have behaved."

"But, your ladyship—" cried Walworth.

"I know what you would say, sir. I know your modesty; but you must allow me to speak of your conduct as I feel it deserves: it is princely; we all appreciate it. Your daughter is very charming, and very amiable—beautiful in person, and refined in manner—everything I could desire, in short, and I esteem my son singularly fortunate in having secured her affections."

"Madam, this is too much! I can't bear it," cried the old hosier. "It cuts me to the quick."

"I had no idea he was so sensitive," thought Lady Lorimer. "Excuse me, my dear Mr Walworth; I wouldn't distress you for the world, but I must tell you how enchanted we all are with the alliance my son is about to form, and how highly we think of your conduct."

"No more, madam, I entreat of you!—no more!"

"Very well, sir," cried the Lady Mayoress, rather surprised. "I have done. How extraordinarily sensitive he must be."

Meanwhile, the Lord Mayor, though he felt the situation very awkward and embarrassing, good-naturedly advanced towards Alice and her mother, and greeted them with much kindness and courtesy.

Shocked and surprised at Tradescant's unaccountable behaviour, Lady Dawes went up to him to call him to order.

"What's the matter?" she said. "Is this your gallantry? Why don't you speak to your intended?"

And she pushed him towards Alice.

"Good morning, Alice," he said. "Hope you're quite well."

"Is that all you've got to say to me?" she rejoined, in a tone of pique. "You scarcely deserve an answer, sir. I thought you would be charmed to see me, but you appear quite cold. The Lady Mayoress has been excessively kind. I'm sure I shall like her vastly."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Tradescant, in an indifferent tone.

"Yes, indeed, sir. You don't seem to care much about it. I don't think I'll have you unless you change your manner. You don't look like a lover at all to-day."

"Don't I?" exclaimed Tradescant. "Sorry for it. I'm confoundedly sleepy," he added, yawning. "Didn't get to bed till four o'clock this morning."

"Not till four? What a dreadful rake! But you must leave off these bad habits when you are married."

"By-the-by, I *was* lucky at basset last night. What d'ye think? I broke the bank at Picard's just before the fire broke out. You've heard of the fire, eh?"

"Hush!" cried Alice, alarmed. "Don't speak so loud, or papa may hear you."

"Never mind! I don't care if he does."

"But I do, for he objects to play, and if he suspects you gamble, he'll withdraw his consent."

"Well, let him—"

"Don't be so hasty. You're quite unlike yourself this morning, Mr Lorimer. You're not like the same person you were yester-evening in the City Mall. Late hours and play, they say, spoil the sweetest tempers. You must promise me to behave better when you're married."

"Alice," said Tradescant, in an altered tone, "I won't attempt to keep up this delusion longer. You must no longer regard me as a suitor. I resign all claims to your hand. I restore you the troth you plighted to me yesterday. You are once more free!"

"Can I believe my ears?" she cried. "But no, no! it is *not* true. It is done to try me."

"It is perfectly true," rejoined Tradescant, unmoved. "A difficulty has arisen on your father's part."

"On *his* part! Oh, then it can easily be set right. What is it?—what is it?"

"He declines to fulfil his promise, that's all," returned Tradescant. "He won't give you a fortune; and that being an essential condition—an essential condition, I repeat—the engagement is at an end."

"He can't be so cruel, I'm sure," cried Alice, rushing up to her father. "Say you will at once, papa—say you will give me the plum."

But Mr Walworth shook his head.

"Not a shilling," he said. "If Mr Lorimer really loves you, he'll take you without a fortune."

Poor Alice was flying back to Tradescant, when the Lady Mayoress majestically interposed.

"Let me put the question to Mr Walworth," she said. "Do you decidedly refuse, sir, to give your daughter the fortune you promised her?"

"Under present circumstances, I decidedly do, madam. As I have just said, if your son is sincerely attached to my daughter, he will not make her fortune a point."

"Allow me to set you right on that score, Mr Walworth—it is the main point. I must speak plainly to you, I find. It was the promised fortune, and not the connection, that induced me to consent. Do you think I would suffer my son to enter a family like yours, unless there was something to compensate him? If he chooses to go to St Mary-axe for a wife instead of St James's, it is because he expects to get money, whereas in the other case he might only get rank. A man of the world would understand this, Mr Walworth, and I thought you *did* understand it, sir."

"Hear me, madam," cried the old hosier.

"No, sir, I won't hear you," rejoined the Lady Mayoress, with asperity. "You have acted most improperly You have come to us under false pretences. You have taken us in, sir."

"Your ladyship's anger is excusable," observed Mrs Walworth, "and I can make every allowance. But you go too far."

"On the contrary, I restrain myself, madam," rejoined Lady Lorimer, haughtily. "I reproach myself with having countenanced this match at all. I might have known what to expect in dealing with vulgar people."

"Vulgar people!" cried Mrs Walworth. "You have changed your tone with a vengeance, madam. Just now we were elegant and well-bred."

"Because—But no matter. You appear in your true colours now, madam."

"And so do you, madam," rejoined Mrs Walworth, plucking up a spirit. "I can discover no reason why you should give yourself these airs. A hosier's wife is as good as a draper's wife any day, and I have yet to learn that Cheapside is a more fashionable quarter than St Mary-axe."

"This is to my face!" cried the Lady Mayoress. "Oh! that I should live to be thus insulted! What an escape we have had!"

"You don't share, I trust, in her ladyship's displeasure?" said Mrs Walworth, casting imploring looks at Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, both of whom regarded her distantly and haughtily. "I am not to blame. I can't help it. You said you liked me just now."

"Things have changed," replied Lady Dawes.

"Then I have been valued solely for my fortune?" cried Alice.

"To be sure, you silly child," rejoined Lady Dawes, in a supercilious tone. "What else did you suppose you were valued for?—not for your wit, your beauty, or your birth?"

"Your ladyship, at all events, led me to believe so," said Alice.

"I never approved of the match, and am glad it is broken off," observed Mrs Chatteris, scornfully. "I thought it most unsuitable to Tradescant—in fact, a shocking mésalliance."

"You told me quite the contrary just now, madam," said Alice.

"You were very simple to credit me," replied Mrs Chatteris; "but I am perfectly candid now."

"Somewhat too much so, methinks," rejoined Alice. "Come, papa," she added to Mr Walworth, "we have been here quite long enough. I am infinitely obliged by your refusal to give me a fortune. It was the kindest thing you could have done. I've had a lesson I shan't easily forget."

"Stay!" cried the Lord Mayor. "You are under a misconception, and I cannot allow you to depart without setting it right. If any person has been deceived in this matter it is Mr Walworth. He has behaved most handsomely throughout, as I can testify. He came here prepared to fulfil his promise. He came here under the impression that he was about to confide his daughter to a man of honour and solidity of character; but when he found out his mistake, and that it was to a rake and a gambler that his daughter was engaged, he very properly broke off the match."

"And from whom did he learn this unfavourable character of our son, Sir Gresham?" demanded Lady Lorimer.

"From me, madam," answered the Lord Mayor. "Do you think I would conceal the truth? Do you think I would be a party to any deception? No consideration should have induced me to keep silence. Mr Walworth, I repeat, has acted in a perfectly straightforward and honourable manner. So far from blaming him, I approve of his conduct. I should have acted in the same manner myself. If Tradescant is disappointed he has only to thank himself. If you are disappointed, you have no just cause to be so—neither have any other members of my family, for you knew exactly how the case stood. I could have wished the matter had not gone thus far—but it is well it has gone no farther. I should be sorry for Alice, but that I think she is rather to be congratulated than pitied."

"It is not pleasant to have one's illusions rudely dispelled, however salutary it may be," Alice replied. "But I dare say I may some day be of your lordship's opinion."

"On my soul the girl has a great deal of spirit," mentally ejaculated Sir Felix.

"As all the blame is to be thrown on my shoulders," remarked Tradescant, who had conducted himself with great nonchalance throughout, "it is lucky they are able to bear it. It doesn't give me much concern to be called a rake and a gambler, because every man of fashion is liable to be so designated, and with some people it would be accounted a recommendation. I am much obliged to your lordship," he added to the Lord Mayor, "for the good character you have given me, but trust this will be the last application of the kind made to you. If Mr Walworth has been wilfully blind to the advantages of the connection he might have formed, and fancies his daughter has had an escape, I leave him to the full enjoyment of that opinion. And if Alice doesn't grieve more than I shall that the engagement is terminated, I don't think she is likely to break her heart. Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to wish you all a very good morning." And with a ceremonious bow to the company he quitted the room.

"Your chair waits, madam," said the Lady Mayoress, significantly, to Mrs Walworth.

"My chariot is at the door, my dear madam," interposed good-natured Sir Felix. "It shall take you and Miss Walworth home, if you please."

"You are very obliging, Sir Felix," she replied. "I accept the offer with gratitude."

"Permit me to conduct you to it," said the little alderman, tendering her an arm.

"I won't ask you to stay longer, madam," said the Lord Mayor, "since, after such a scene as has just occurred, you must be naturally anxious to escape. But allow me to see you to the carriage, Alice, or I shall think we don't part friends."

"That is the last thing I should desire, my lord," she replied, taking his arm.

Curtseying formally to the Lady Mayoress and her daughters, who bent in a stately manner in return, Mrs Walworth and Alice, escorted as we have described, quitted the room, followed by the old hosier.

X.

AN INCENSED FATHER.

Half an hour afterwards, Tradescant was in his own room, lounging on a sofa, sipping his chocolate, and reading the *Flying Post* as composedly as if nothing particular had happened, when Tiplady suddenly entered with a countenance of dismay, exclaiming, "Sir! sir! your father—"

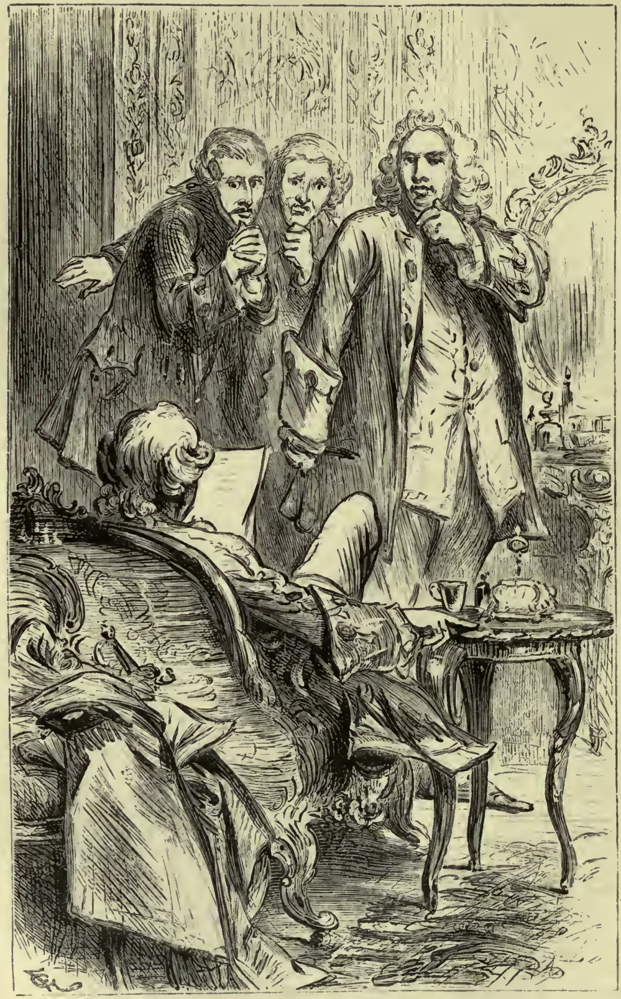
"Well, what of him?" demanded the young man, in a languid and indifferent tone.

"I don't like his looks, sir. Hadn't you better get up?"

"Why should I disturb myself, Tip?" rejoined Tradescant, calmly, and without shifting his position.

"Because—But here he is, sir!" cried the valet.

As the words were uttered, the Lord Mayor entered the room, closely followed by Crutchet and Candish. Tiplady had not exaggerated in stating that his lordship's looks boded mischief. Unquestionably they did so. After advancing a few paces, he stood still, sternly regarding his son, whose careless attitude served to increase his displea-



"'Now, Sir, get up!' cried the Lord Mayor, in a voice of thunder.'

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sure. Before making any remark, he signed to Tiplady to leave the room, and the valet, without pausing for any more emphatic injunction, beat a retreat, closing the door after him.

"Now, sir, get up!" cried the Lord Mayor, in a voice of thunder. "Are you going to lie there all day?"

"Pardon me, sir," exclaimed the young man, springing to his feet. "I was so much interested in this account of the fire at Picard's that I didn't notice your presence. A terrible fire, sir! The newspaper says you were at it."

"Does the newspaper mention how the fire originated, sir?" demanded Sir Gresham, sternly. "Does it give a list of all the gamblers and sharpers who were there assembled? Does it describe the fracas which led to the conflagration? Perhaps you might be able to furnish some additional particulars."

"I, sir!" exclaimed Tradescant in confusion.

"Yes, you, sir!" repeated his father, vehemently. "I have certain information that you were one of the gamblers present. Look me in the face and deny it if you can."

"I shall not attempt to deny it, sir," said Tradescant. "I know whence you obtained your information," he added, glancing at Candish.

"I am thankful at least to be spared the shame and disgrace of having you brought before me at the Mansion House Court to-day, in connection with the two sharpers Gleek and Bragge."

"Are they in custody?" inquired Tradescant.

"They are, and you may rely on it they shan't go unpunished. But what shall I say to you, sir, who have associated with these infamous persons, and who may become as bad as them if not checked in your scandalous career?"

"Sir!" exclaimed his son.

"Don't interrupt me. If I do not publicly reprimand you, as I must have done had you been unhappily brought before me to-day, I should be wanting to myself if I allowed conduct like yours to pass unpunished. You have disgraced the name you bear. You have forfeited the character of a gentleman. You have turned a deaf ear to all my remonstrances—you laugh at my threats and deem them idle—but you will find I am now in earnest. The day of grace is past."

"Oh! don't say so, sir!" interposed Crutchet. "His errors are great, no doubt, but not unpardonable. Remember he is your son."

"I have no longer a son," said the Lord Mayor, in a terrible voice. "I cast him off for ever!"

Tradescant looked astounded, but made no effort to mitigate his father's wrath. Crutchet, however, threw himself at the Lord Mayor's feet. "Oh, sir, recall those awful words!" he ejaculated. "Do not—do not discard him."

At the same time Candish approached Tradescant, and said, in a low tone, "Down on your knees, young man, and implore your father's forgiveness."

But Tradescant refused to move.

"Arise, sir," said Sir Gresham to Crutchet. "You plead for him in vain. I am as inflexible as I should be if I were simply the magistrate and not the justly incensed father. Hear me, sir," he continued, with additional severity, to Tradescant. "You will leave this house to-day and not return to it again. I won't suffer you to approach me more. A sufficient allowance shall be made for your maintenance, though not for waste. But mark me well, and be assured I shall not swerve from what I say, if you exceed this allowance, or squander it in gambling and riot, it will thenceforward entirely cease."

"Again, I conjure you, ask his forgiveness," whispered Candish.

But Tradescant still looked sullen and obstinate.

"That nothing may prevent you from commencing a new and honourable career," pursued the Lord Mayor, "all your debts shall be paid, but I must have an exact statement of them without delay. I know he has borrowed money from you, Crutchet. How much?"

"Oh! don't heed me, sir! I don't desire to be repaid. I gave it freely."

"My son ought to have blushed to borrow money from you at all," rejoined Sir Gresham; "but he is baser than I deem if he would condescend to accept it as a gift. Again I ask how much you lent him?"

"I cannot answer the question, sir," replied Crutchet, shaking his head.

"You won't," cried the Lord Mayor. "Zounds! sir.

you are enough to drive me mad. You'll provoke me to dismiss you, if you continue thus obstinate."

"Your lordship will do as you please," replied the old man, with a look of resignation. "I shall have little left to live for if your son goes."

"I cannot allow Mr Crutchet to suffer for me," said Tradescant, turning round and confronting his father. "Since your lordship talks of dismissing him, it is right you should know he has lent me all his savings."

"All his savings!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "Gracious Heaven!—all his savings!"

"Yes, all, sir—so he assured me!"

"What matters it?" cried Crutchet, with a look of extreme distress. "I have no one but myself to provide for. I have no one to come after me."

"I cannot state exactly how much I owe him," pursued Tradescant: "but it is a considerable sum—some thousand pounds."

"And he has kept no count of it! he, who is usually so exact!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "Oh! Crutchet, I could not have believed this of you!" he added, in a tone of mingled sorrow and anger. "However you shall be fully paid, and at once. And now, sir," he continued to Tradescant, "you have heard my decision. Pack up your things, and don't let me find you here on my return."

"Your lordship shall be obeyed," rejoined Tradescant.

"All this trumpery shall be sent after you," pursued the Lord Mayor, glancing round the room. "And so, farewell for ever, sir." And he turned to depart.

"Will you let him go?" said Candish, in the same low tone as before. "Speak now, or it will be too late."

"Father—a word!" exclaimed Tradescant, following him. "You have passed a severe sentence upon me—perhaps I deserve it—and therefore have no right to complain; but will you give me a day for reflection?"

"To what end?" demanded the Lord Mayor. "If I thought there was any likelihood—But no! I have been too often deceived to place any faith in your professions."

"Yet do not refuse him, sir," said Crutchet. "If my long and faithful services give me any claim upon you, let me urge it now. For my sake grant this respite."

"I cannot resist the appeal," said Sir Gresham. "Though I have little hope of any good result, yet I will not deprive him of this last chance. You can remain here till to-morrow," he added to Tradescant. "Come with me, Crutchet. My first business shall be to discharge this thoughtless young man's obligations to you."

"Nay, sir—'

"I will take no refusal. I won't have this debt upon my conscience another minute. Come with me to my private room, and I will give you a cheque for five thousand pounds."

"But that is too much, sir, by five hundred pounds."

"Soh! I have elicited the truth at last. In paying you, however, I must have your solemn promise not to lend him money again."

"Speak to him. I think he relents," whispered Candish to Tradescant.

"Have you not one kind word to say to me in parting, father?" demanded Tradescant.

"I have said and done enough," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "I have given you a day for reflection. Let me see how you employ it." And he quitted the room, followed slowly by Crutchet.

Candish, however, remained behind, though his presence was unnoticed by Tradescant, who continued for some minutes as if stupified, with his head upon his breast. After a while the old man touched his arm, and said, "Don't forget your father's last words. Employ the day profitably. You may yet retrieve yourself."

"You think so! But how?"

"Nay, that is for you to determine. Reflect!"

And he, too, quitted the room, leaving Tradescant alone

XI.

PRUE.

"Would to Heaven some good genius would befriend me!" cried Tradescant, flinging himself on the couch. "Without such aid I am utterly undone."

As the words escaped him, a tap was heard at the door, and a voice, which he recognized as that of his sister Millicent, inquired, "May we come in?"

"What the deuce does she want? and who has she got with her?" thought Tradescant. "However, I suppose I must admit them. Yes, yes--come in!" he called out.

On this the door opened, and Millicent entered with Prue. On seeing them, Tradescant sprang to his feet, and began to apologize to his cousin for the state of his room, saying he was quite unprepared for such a visit, as his sisters rarely came near him.

"Indeed, I can't conceive what brings Milly now," he said, "unless she has come to laugh at me."

"Mr Crutchet has sent us to you," replied his sister, gravely.

"Very considerate of him," rejoined Tradescant. "I suppose he thought you would help to cheer me in my affliction."

"Perhaps he might, and we will try to do so if you'll let us. And to begin, I don't think you've any great reason to regret that this engagement with Alice Walworth is at an end. She wouldn't have suited you."

"Very likely not—but her fortune would."

"Oh! Tradescant, I'm sorry to hear you confess yourself so mercenary. Then you had no love for this girl?"

"I was very much in love with her fortune. You look shocked, cousin," he added to Prue. "But my father has set me an example in candour to-day, and I'm bound to imitate it."

"Lay aside this ill-timed levity, I beseech you, brother," said Milly. "We want to have some serious talk with you."

"Now's the time, then," he rejoined. "I never was more seriously inclined in my born days. I've lost my last chance of recruiting my exchequer. My father is frightfully incensed, and talks of turning me out of doors. You'll scarcely wonder, then, that I am beginning to think of turning over a new leaf."

"I'm delighted to hear it," cried Prue. "Don't think about it, but act. Reformation is easy to talk about, but somewhat difficult to practise. However, if you are in earnest, you are sure to succeed. Shall I tell you what to do? Commence by giving up your present intimates, who, however high their station, are very dangerous acquaintances."

"Who told you so, my little cousin? Milly, I'll be sworn. However, perhaps you are right. They are pleasant, but dangerous. As a reformed character, I must naturally shake them off—or they'll shake me off, which will come to the same thing. What next?"

"Then you must entirely abandon play—shun cards and dice—leave off betting."

"I may try, cousin, but I fear the passion of gaming has got too firm hold of me to be subdued."

"Make a determined effort, and you'll conquer it. It is not like a man to be ruled by so debasing a passion."

"Egad, you rouse better feelings in my breast, Prue. I begin to be ashamed of my weakness. If I could but conquer this all-absorbing passion, the rest would be easy."

"Consider what its gratification leads to," pursued Prue; "to shame, ruin, despair, madness. By its indulgence you will lose all that ought to be dear to you—self-respect, honour, social position. You will be cast off by relatives, avoided by friends, and become an object of pity and contempt to every one. That the picture is not overdrawn you will admit, for you must have seen many a ruined gamester in the condition I describe."

"Very true. I have," said Tradescant.

"But in your case, as I understand, cousin, you have not even had the security of playing with men of honour, but have been preyed upon by knaves and sharpers."

"I have been an egregious fool, no doubt, Prue," replied Tradescant. "But my eyes were opened last night to my folly, and I trust I shall be wiser in future."

"Prue gives you very good advice, brother, and I hope you'll follow it," said Milly.

"He acknowledges his faults, and therefore is in a fair way of amendment," rejoined Prue.

"Well, thus much I will admit, Prue," said Tradescant. "Good advice doesn't seem so unpalatable from you as it does from most other people. I have listened to you as I rarely, if ever, listen to any one else. My father's chaplain, Dr Dipple, might preach to me for an hour without producing any other effect than sending me to sleep. But I don't understand what interest you can feel in my reformation, Prue? My destiny must be matter of indifference to you."

"Not so," she rejoined, quickly. Then checking herself, she added, with a blush, "Nothing would delight me more than to free you from the fetters you have so long voluntarily worn, and help to place you in the position you are fitted to occupy."

"Faith, I must reform, if only to justify your favourable opinion. I never had half so much good said of me before."

At this moment the door, which had been intentionally left ajar, and at which Crutchet and Candish had been listening, was opened by them.

XII.

IN WHICH A DECISIVE STEP IS TAKEN.

"Come in, both of you," cried Tradescant, perceiving them. "I owe you a thousand thanks, Bow Bells, for sending my cousin Prue to me. She has undertaken the difficult task of my reformation."

"I overheard what she said, sir, and heartily wish her success."

"I don't think the task will be difficult, judging by the commencement," said Prue. "But in any case I shan't be discouraged from proceeding with it."

"What will you say, Crutchet, if my fair cousin should induce me to take a place in the counting-house with you?"

"I should say she has worked a miracle," rejoined Crutchet. "But I fear that's not likely."

"She has such powers of persuasion that she can lead me to do anything she wishes," said Tradescant.

"Then I will exert them to the utmost," she rejoined, blushing, "and urge you to take your place with Mr Crutchet."

"Such a step would have the best effect with Sir Gresham," observed Candish, "and might induce him to alter his decision."

"But what will my friends say?" cried Tradescant.

"Heed them not," rejoined Candish. "Their opinion is not worth thinking about."

"Then my mother and sisters!—I shall never be able to face them. They'll deem the step such a degradation."

"One sister, whom you seem to overlook, won't think it so," observed Milly. "On the contrary, you will rise greatly in her estimation."

"And Tom Chatteris! how shall I pacify him? He will disown me."

"Better be disowned by him than discarded by your father," rejoined Candish. "But you needn't trouble yourself about Captain Chatteris. He won't appear upon the scene for some time to come. Writs are out against him, and he has run away to avoid arrest. Word to this effect was brought to the Lord Mayor just as he was about to start for the Mansion House, and, as you will conceive, did not tend to improve his temper."

"A pretty finale to Tom's career!" exclaimed Tradescant.

"Only what might have been expected," groaned Crutchet. "I always thought it would come to this with him."

"Captain Chatteris may think himself lucky if he doesn't get lodged in the Fleet," observed Candish. "His object in decamping is evidently to force the Lord Mayor to pay his debts; but he will find himself mistaken. His lordship declares he will do nothing further for him."

"He has done too much already," said Crutchet.

"Well, I own I can take this step with less reluctance, since I shan't be exposed to Tom's raillery," said Tradescant. "I'll come down to you in an hour, Bow Bells."

"Why not now, sir?" rejoined Crutchet. "You may change your mind in the interim."

"Oh! pray go at once!" said Prue, in a tone not to be resisted.

Milly was about to add her entreaties, when the door was opened by Tiplady.

"Sir William Stanhope and Sir Francis Dashwood wait upon your honour," said the valet.

"I can't see them, Tip," rejoined Tradescant. "Deny me."

The valet bowed and retired.

"A good beginning, cousin," cried Prue. "You'll do."

"I won't allow my resolution to be shaken," he rejoined.

Shortly afterwards, the door was again opened by Tiplady,

"Her ladyship desires to see you, sir," said the valet.

"Don't go," whispered Candish.

"Say I'm particularly engaged, Tip. Business to attend to in the counting-house."

"Lord, sir! I must find some other excuse. Her ladyship will never believe *that*."

"Do as you are bid, you impertinent puppy," cried Tradescant.

The valet shrugged his shoulders, and retired.

"You do wisely, I think, to keep out of mamma's way at this crisis," said Milly.

"I won't trust myself with her till the decisive step is taken," he rejoined. "Come, Bow Bells, I'm ready to accompany you."

"Huzza!" exclaimed Crutchet. "I never was better pleased in my life."

"Zounds! another interruption!" exclaimed Tradescant, as the door was once more opened by Tiplady.

"The Lady Mayoress, Lady Dawes, and Mrs Chatteris," said the valet.

The three ladies followed close upon the announcement.

The Lady Mayoress looked surprised at the company she found in her son's room, and addressing the two girls, said, somewhat sharply, "What are you doing here, Milly?—and you, too, miss?" she added to Prue. "Go to your own room directly."

But, to her astonishment and indignation, neither of them stirred.

"Don't you hear me?" she continued, still more imperiously.

"Yes, mamma, but—"

"Then go at once. I want to speak to Tradescant." And she signed to Candish and Crutchet to leave the room.

"Stay!" exclaimed Tradescant; "I wish all to hear what I have got to say, and to bear it in memory. The last hour has wrought a great change in me, madam," addressing his mother; "I am no longer the same person."

"So it appears," she rejoined. "Perhaps the message I have just received from Tiplady about the counting-house was correct?"

"It was, madam. From this time forward, I intend to devote myself sedulously to business, and shall try to tread in my father's footsteps."

"Amazement!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress. "I thought you had a spirit far above shop-keeping."

"I tell you, madam, my opinions have undergone a complete change. I see through the follies I have committed, and am determined to reform."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Crutchet, unable to repress his delight, notwithstanding the awe in which he stood of the Lady Mayoress. "Here'll be rare news for Sir Gresham!"

"And by whom has this wondrous conversion been effected?" demanded Lady Lorimer. "By Mr Crutchet?"

"No, madam," he replied. "I can't claim the merit of it. I wish I could."

"It is due to my cousin Prue," said Tradescant, taking her hand. "She awakened these better feelings in my breast, and if I become an improved character, it will be mainly owing to her."

"I rejoice to have been instrumental in such a good work in any way," said Prue, "but I think Milly's share in it was as great as mine."

"Very pretty, indeed!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, contemptuously. "And can you be such a simpleton, Tradescant, as to allow yourself to be guided by a couple of nonsensical girls? What do they know of the world, or of the world's opinion? If you want advice, why don't you seek it from those able to afford it?—from me—from your sisters, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris—not from inexperienced chits like these."

"If Tradescant takes this step he'll repent it," said Lady Dawes. "He'll forfeit his position in society."

"Oh! if my poor Tom were here, he'd soon laugh him out of such folly," cried Mrs Chatteris.

"No one will laugh me out of it," said Tradescant, firmly. "My mind is made up. And as it will be useless to prolong this discussion, mother, I must beg you to excuse me. Mr Crutchet, we will go down to the counting-house together."

"I'm ready, sir," he replied, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "I never received any order I was better pleased to obey—never."

"Oh, Tradescant!—oh, my dear son—you can't mean this!" cried the Lady Mayoress, falling on his neck.

"Be firm, sir," cried Candish.

"Who was it spoke?" cried Lady Lorimer. "Why, this is—"

"Mr Candish, at your ladyship's service," he replied, bowing.

"Oh! it's that dreadful man!" almost shrieked the Lady Mayoress. "I see it now. He's at the bottom of it all. Mischief was sure to happen to a family when such a wretch was admitted into it."

"You ought to thank him, mother," said Tradescant, coldly. "He has helped to save me from ruin. Allow me to pass."

"Oh! I shan't hinder you!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, bitterly. "But you'll never be the same to me, after taking this ill-considered—this degrading step."

"Nor to me," said Lady Dawes.

"Nor to me," added Mrs Chatteris. "Oh, that my poor Tom were here!"

With a kindly glance at Prue and Milly, Tradescant then passed out, followed by Candish and Crutchet, the latter still continuing to rub his hands gleefully.

XIII.

A CARTEL.

The book-keepers looked up in amazement when Crutchet informed them, as he and Tradescant entered the counting-house, that henceforward Mr Lorimer would undertake the management of the business in person, and still greater astonishment was manifested by the shopmen and apprentices. Indeed, the announcement would have been received with absolute incredulity by the latter, had not Tradescant confirmed it by remaining for some time in the shop with Crutchet. On proceeding to an inner room attached to the counting-house reserved for the heads of the establishment, Tradescant found Herbert seated at a table with a bundle of letters before him, which he was docketing and tying up, and, going up to him, said, in a frank and conciliatory tone,

"I beg that all differences may be at an end between us, cousin. I am heartily ashamed of my conduct towards you, and entreat your forgiveness."

"You cannot speak more handsomely, cousin," replied Herbert, warmly grasping the hand held out to him. "Be assured I shall think no more of the past, and trust we may be good friends in future."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Tradescant. "You have set me an example which I am determined to follow. Henceforth I mean to devote myself energetically to business."

"I rejoice to hear you express such sentiments, cousin," said Herbert, "though I confess I did not expect them. But how has this beneficial change been wrought?"

"Chiefly by your sister Prue," replied Tradescant. "If I become an exemplary character like my father—as I hope I may be—it will be owing to her."

"Yes, Mr Herbert," cried Crutchet, who had followed his young master into the room, "your sister's a very wonderful young lady. She has accomplished more in a few minutes than I could do in years. It wasn't what she said exactly, but the way in which she said it, that did the business. Mr Lorimer listened to her as he never would listen to me or to any one else."

"Very true, Crutchet," replied Tradescant. "She struck the right chord, and the response was immediate."

"An infallible proof of her judgment and skill," said Crutchet. "Such is the influence a good wife always exercises over her husband. But no such influence, I suspect, would have been obtained by Miss Walworth had your proposed union with her taken place."

"Is the match broken off, then?" inquired Herbert.

"Fortunately for both parties, it is so," replied Tradescant. "There was little love on either side. It must be reckoned among my follies that I should have made such a rash engagement, and I must own that you were very badly treated, Herbert, both by the young lady and myself. However, the field is now open to you again if you choose to enter it."

"That is scarcely likely," observed Herbert. "If I felt any liking for the girl it has been effectually cured. She is a coquette, and I have no desire to be jilted a second time."

"Well, sir," said Crutchet to Tradescant, "if you ever contemplate matrimony again—and I think it would be a wise thing—you needn't search far for a wife to suit you."

"Say you so, Crutchet! Where is she to be found?"

Ere an answer could be given the door was opened, and Sir Felix Bland and Mr Thomas Potter entered the room. Both these gentlemen looked surprised to find Tradescant there. However, they made no remark; but after the ordinary salutations had passed, Sir Felix said,—

"Our business is with you, Mr Herbert Lorimer, and I wish it were of a more agreeable nature. Mr Potter has waited upon me on the part of his friend Mr Wilkes to demand an apology for the affront you put upon him in the City Mall yesterday, or—you understand—satisfaction."

"Let me add, sir," said Tom Potter, "that Mr Wilkes considers he is conferring a favour in according you a meeting, as he does not consider your social position entitles you to cross swords with a gentleman. However, he is willing to waive that point. This is my message, sir, and you must excuse me for delivering it plainly."

"Mr Wilkes does me infinite honour, sir," said Herbert, "and as I have no intention of offering the slightest apology, I shall be compelled to put him to the disagreeable necessity of affording me a meeting."

"Very good, sir," replied Potter. "Nothing, then, remains but to fix the time and place."

"Since the duel appears inevitable, Mr Potter," observed Sir Felix, "all arrangements had better be made without delay."

"By all means, Sir Felix. The weapons to be swords; that I presume is understood. The hour—eight o'clock to-morrow morning, if that will suit you. The place we propose is White Conduit House, Islington. Mr Wilkes and myself frequent the house; and arrangements shall be made with Mr Tilbury, the obliging host, for the use of the bowling-green on the occasion."

"The hour and the place will suit us perfectly; and we are agreed as to the weapons, eh?" said the little alderman, appealing to his principal, who nodded.

"At eight to-morrow morning, then, we shall expect you. I have the honour to wish you good day, gentlemen."

And he was departing, when Tradescant called out, "A word with you before you go, Tom. Do me the favour to mention to our friends that you found me here."

"Certainly, if you desire it, Lorimer. But I don't see that the circumstance will interest them particularly."

"It may divert them to learn that I have taken to business habits."

"Aha! a good joke! And pray when did this business fit seize you?"

"About an hour ago. But it's not a passing whim, as you seem to imagine, but a fixed resolution."

"Whim or not," exclaimed Potter, "I'll bet you five hundred to five it don't last two days."

Tradescant was about to cry "Done!" but a look from Crutchet checked him.

"Having forsworn betting and gaming, Tom," he said, "I can't take you, but I should most assuredly win."

"I wish anybody else would take the odds," said Potter. "What say you, old gentleman?" he added, glancing at Crutchet.

"I never bet, sir," replied that personage. "It's against my principles. But I'd stake my reputation on Mr Lorimer's firmness."

"You'll find me here every day, Tom, unless I'm on 'Change, or at Lloyd's," said Tradescant.

"And ready to serve a customer, no doubt! Well, when I want some cloth I'll come to you. I see through your game. You want to re-establish yourself in your father's good graces. Very prudent. If you hold out for a week, you'll deserve to be canonized."

"I mean to go on as I have begun," said Tradescant.

"Reserve these fine speeches for the Lord Mayor," rejoined Tom Potter, with an incredulous laugh. "They won't pass with me. In another week I shall expect to see you again at the Dilettanti Club, the Jockey Club, the cock-pit, the Groom-Porters', Ranelagh, and all your old haunts."

"No you won't. Hark ye, Tom, I mean to sell Regulus. Will you buy him? You shall have him cheap."

"I'll think about it. You play your part uncommonly well, I confess, but you can't impose on me—ha! ha! Tomorrow, at eight, with you, gentlemen, at White Conduit House—this day week with you, Lorimer, at the Dilettanti." And bowing to the company, he withdrew.

"I'm sorry your quarrel with Mr Wilkes could not be adjusted," said Sir Felix to Herbert, as the door closed on Tom Potter; "but as you would make no apology, I was obliged to let the affair take its course."

"I hope you understand small-sword exercise tolerably well, Herbert," observed Tradescant, "for you'll have to do with a shrewd antagonist in Mr Wilkes. He is a master of fence."

"That's more than I am," rejoined Herbert, smiling. "However, I'm not afraid of him."

"I'll give you a lesson by-and-by, and teach you a feint or two that may be useful. I only wish I could take your place. With all his proficiency, Wilkes is no match for me. We frequently practise at Angelo's fencing academy in the Haymarket, and I generally have the best of it."

"But you mustn't fight a duel now, sir," cried Crutchet, anxiously.

"Have no fear, Bow Bells. Be the consequences what they may, I must be present at this encounter."

"Then I must go too, said Crutchet.

"What! you can't trust me out of your sight, eh?" said Tradescant, laughing. "I'll bring Herbert to your house in Aldersgate-street at half-past seven to-morrow morning, Sir Felix."

"Just what I was about to propose," rejoined the little alderman. "We must be punctual as the clock at the bowling-green—a charming place of rendezvous, by-the-by. Any further commands for me, Mr Herbert?"

"None whatever, Sir Felix. Indeed, I feel I have already trespassed too much on your good nature."

"Don't say a word about it, my dear friend. Enchanted to serve you. I trust to bring you through this affair creditably. As you neither drink nor play, your head is sure to be clear and your hand steady. Still, an hour's practice with Tradescant will do you no harm. That's all I've got to say. Adieu, gentlemen!" And bowing around, he took his departure.

XIV.

WHICH EXHIBITS THE REAL STATE OF THE LORD MAYOR'S FEELINGS TOWARDS HIS SON.

On the evening of the same day, on the return of the Lord Mayor from the Mansion House, Crutchet, who was all impatience to communicate the joyful intelligence of Tradescant's reformation to his lordship, did not wait for any summons, but immediately went up-stairs, and found Sir Gresham in his cabinet, closeted with Candish.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the worthy fellow, as he entered the room, "I've news for you that will gladden your heart. A wonderful change has been accomplished in a few hours Your son has become a man of business. He has been in the counting-house all day with me—indeed, he is there now—hard at work, sir—hard at work. 'Tis astonishing the capacity he displays. You'll be quite surprised when you come to talk to him. If it wouldn't be troubling you too much, come down now and see him, pray?"

"Not now, Crutchet," replied Sir Gresham. "I am glad to hear what you say of him, and trust this beneficial change may last. But it is a little too early yet to judge. And I have had so many disappointments, that I dare not indulge hopes which may never be realized."

"But this is performance, not promise, sir," cried Crutchet. "You know how averse Mr Tradescant has always been to business—especially to our business. You know the efforts I have made to conquer his objections, and how unavailing they have been. Well, sir, in order to convince you that he is in earnest in his design to reform, he has got over all his prejudices, and set resolutely and manfully to work. You must applaud his determination, I am sure, sir."

"I do applaud it, Crutchet," replied the Lord Mayor, "only I am not quite so sanguine as you are. If he perseveres in his present course, he may win back the good opinion he has forfeited. But sudden changes are seldom lasting, and a few days at least must elapse before I shall be able to judge as to his stability of purpose. Meantime, as he has shown an unmistakeable disposition to amend, he deserves to be encouraged, and I will therefore readily grant him a further period of probation—say a week. That is all I can do now."

"I must be content, I suppose," sighed Crutchet; "but I will answer for him with my life."

And with a somewhat disappointed look he quitted the room.

"It pains me to treat the kind-hearted fellow thus," observed Sir Gresham, "but unless firmness is manifested, no permanent effect will be produced."

"My belief is your son is cured, my lord," rejoined Candish; "but in order to remove all doubts from your mind, I will put his firmness to the proof, and you shall see how he stands it."

"Do so," replied the Lord Mayor. "Yet don't try him too severely. I long to forgive him. But prudence counsels me to forbear. The impression must be deepened, or it will be as quickly effaced as made. What surprises me most is the suddenness of the cure—if cure it be. I cannot conceive how it has been effected."

"I will tell you how it has been accomplished, my lord. Your strong manifestation of displeasure prepared the way, but the change was wrought by your niece. This your son himself frankly admitted."

"Then he is under great obligations to her. The more I see of Prue the better I like her, and what you now tell me raises her still higher in my estimation. Ah! if Tradescant would but choose a good-hearted, sensible girl like this for a wife, I should have some confidence in his future happiness and respectability."

"Such an event is not altogether improbable," said Candish. "Is your lordship aware that her brother Herbert has got an affair of honour on his hands with Mr Wilkes?"

"No, I've heard nothing of it."

"I don't know how the affair originated, but Mr Crutchet tells me it is to be settled at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, on the bowling-green at White Conduit House, Islington. I thought it my duty to inform your lordship of the matter, that you may take any steps you deem proper."

"The bowling-green at White Conduit House! An odd place to fix upon for a hostile meeting! Ah! I now recollect hearing that a set of young reprobates, styling themselves the 'Capuchins,' and wearing the habits of Franciscan friars, meet once a week at White Conduit House to carouse. Wilkes is chairman of the club. He and his crew may intend some practical joke. Herbert mustn't be made their sport."

"Shall I go there, my lord, and look after Herbert?"

"Perhaps I may go myself—but secretly—for I shan't interfere, save in case of necessity. You shall go with me, and I will take sufficient force to prevent any disturbance. I know Tilbury, the landlord of White Conduit House, and a very obliging fellow he is. I'll give him a hint of my intentions."

"Better not, my lord. He may blab, and spoil all. Don't take him into your confidence till the last moment."

"Ay, ay, we must have the laugh against the Capuchins."

"But who acts as Herbert's second?"

"Sir Felix Bland, my lord."

"Sir Felix Bland! Gadzooks! you surprise me! the most pacific person of my acquaintance, and the last I should expect to be engaged in a duel at all. An amicable arrangement of the affair would have been more in his way."

"He tried to arrange it, but your nephew is a lad of great spirit, and having, I suppose, received some affront from Mr Wilkes which he could not brook, refused to apologize."

"I like him the better for it. I wouldn't have a nephew of mine show the white feather. But I wish Tradescant had been his second."

"That remark emboldens me to mention, my lord, that your son will be on the ground, though of course merely as a looker-on."

"I'm glad to hear it. I will be there too—but shall keep in the background. We must start early, in order to get there before them. I'll give you full instructions anon."

"I am at your lordship's orders."

XV.

MASTER AND VALET.

When the business of the day was over—and not before—Tradescant took Herbert to his own room, in order to give him the promised lesson in fencing.

Producing a couple of foils, Tradescant bade him stand on guard, and as Herbert complied, his air and deportment satisfied the other that he would prove no contemptible antagonist. The result of an hour's practice confirmed the good opinion which Tradescant had formed of his cousin's address. As may be expected, however, Herbert had some faults. Possessing in an eminent degree the essentials of the art—quickness of sight, agility of wrist, great flexibility of frame, firmness and swiftness in delivering a thrust, rapidity in parrying and returning, and, above all, remarkable coolness—he was unacquainted with many of the subtleties at that time practised by the most skilful swordsmen, and it was to supply his deficiency in this respect that Tradescant chiefly addressed himself. Herbert proved an apt scholar, and quickly comprehended the instructions given him.

The lesson ended, Tradescant pointed to his collection of swords, and begged Herbert to examine them, and select a weapon that suited him.

"You'll find them of all sizes," he said; "but though you are a tall fellow, I advise you not to choose too long a sword, as if your adversary should get the feeble of your blade, you might find it difficult to disengage your point, and so give him the advantage. Here's a French sword, and a capital one it is. You shall judge of its temper," he added, bending it almost double against the floor, and then allowing it to spring forcibly backwards. "Take it. You won't find a better."

"A beautiful blade indeed!" exclaimed Herbert, as he took the weapon, "and, though very light in hand, not likely to break."

"Break!—not it!" rejoined Tradescant, with a smile. "Follow my instructions, and I'll engage you shall pink your adversary with it."

Soon after this the cousins separated for the night.

For the first time since Tiplady had been in his service, Tradescant remained at home during the whole evening, occupying himself and his astounded valet in putting his room in order. All the portraits of figurantes and prize-fighters, with the pictures of race-horses and cock-fights, bedecking the walls, were taken down; while the dominos and masks, with sundry other articles which did not accord with his present tastes, were transferred to Tiplady. "Take them away," he said; "sell them, or do what you will with them. I shall never wear them more."

"Is your honour serious?" inquired the perplexed valet. "Do you mean to say you have done with masquerades, ridottos, and festinos?"

"Entirely, Tip," rejoined Tradescant. "Ranelagh will never behold me more, nor Vauxhall. Never again shall I mingle as heretofore among the idle votaries of pleasure. I have awakened to a sense of my follies. Henceforth, my air and deportment will be changed, and I shall assume a sober and sedate manner, conformable to the character I mean to profess."

"Sorry to hear it, sir, for I think your present manner is far preferable to the one you propose to adopt."

"My dress also will correspond with my changed deportment. I shall put on plainer attire. You are welcome to all my richest suits, Tip—my gold-laced coats and flowered waistcoats, my Mechlin frills and ruffles and cobweb silk stockings."

"Now I come to think upon it, perhaps your honour did dress a little too showily. A sober style might be better—especially if you mean to occupy yourself with mercantile pursuits. Mr Crutchet should be your model, sir."

"You are laughing at me, rascal, I perceive. Have a care, or I shall withdraw my gift. Tell Le Gros I shan't wear a dishevelled peruke in future, but a plain bob."

"Hadn't you better try a 'prentice's buckle, sir? It is simple, but becoming."

"A truce to your jeers. Do as I bid you. And mind this—I shall expect you to copy me, to lay aside your frivolous and coxcombical manner, to wear a grave countenance, and assume a quiet and respectful deportment."

"Excuse me, sir, I can't play the hypocrite. I haven't a father to cajole."

"Zooks! rascal, do you suspect me of hypocrisy? Mind what I say. Henceforth, no airs—no nonsense—no foppery!"

"And is this expected?"

"Absolutely."

"I'm afraid, sir, the place won't suit me."

"Then provide yourself with another. But as long as you remain, be pleased to obey my orders."

Tradescant completed the measure of Tiplady's astonishment by retiring to rest early, and directing the valet to call him at six o'clock in the morning.

"Bless us! how master is changed to be sure!" mentally ejaculated Tiplady, as he quitted the room. "He's acquiring shockingly bad habits. I shall be obliged to discharge him, in self-defence."

XVI.

WHITE CONDUIT HOUSE.

When Herbert, fully equipped for the fight, and wrapped in a long cloak, entered his cousin's room, a little before seven o'clock next morning, he found that Tradescant had fully completed his toilette, and was in the act of putting on a roquelaure, aided by Tiplady.

"How do you find yourself?" cried Tradescant. "Nerves steady, eh?"

"Perfectly so," replied the other, in a cheerful tone.

"That's right! Then we'll set out at once. A coach is waiting for us in Queen-street. Carry these two swords, Tip, and come with us."

On this the trio descended the staircase as noiselessly as they could, and were let out by the hall-porter, who laughed to himself at what was going on, having let out the Lord Mayor and Candish some quarter of an hour previously.

Beneath the porch outside they found the faithful Crutchet, protected from the cold foggy air by cloak and woollen comforter. Hard by was a hackney-coach, and without making any remarks, all the party entered it with the exception of Tiplady, who, mounting the box, directed the coachman to drive to Aldersgate-street.

The morning was dull and foggy—such as might be expected to usher in a regular November day. The miserable lamps with which Cheapside was at that time provided were still burning, but their feeble glimmer scarcely served to pierce through the murky atmosphere. A few link-boys were seen wandering about with lighted flambeaux, and a couple of these offered their services to the gentlemen in the coach, and were engaged by them. Here and there a shop was opened, but, generally speaking, doors and windows were closed, and the inmates of the houses, it is to be presumed, still a-bed. The few people in the street looked like ghosts, and carts and other vehicles moved slowly and cautiously along.

Not without more than one stoppage did the coachman find his way to Aldersgate-street, and, guided by Tiplady, pulled up at Sir Felix Bland's door. Little could be discerned of the alderman's dwelling, and indeed there was nothing worth notice about it, except that it was a good substantial structure, the lower part being used as a saddler's shop, with a great gilt horse for a sign. The little alderman's chariot, however, was in waiting, and the instant the bell was rung Sir Felix answered the summons in person. He insisted upon Herbert riding with him, and the young man felt bound to comply. In this way the two vehicles proceeded slowly towards the place of rendezvous.

White Conduit House, whither our friends were bound, not on pleasure, but with hostile intent, on this foggy November morning, was situated in the neighbourhood of the pleasant and salubrious suburb of Islington, and much resorted to by the citizens of the last century. It may be described as a second-rate Vauxhall, since it possessed some of the features of the well-known place of entertainment on the Surrey side of the river—now, we regret to say, numbered with the past. But though the fêtes of White Conduit House could not be compared in point of splendour with those of the more fashionable establishment—though its lamps were less numerous, its fireworks less brilliant, and its musicians inferior to those of Vauxhall—though few of the beau-monde patronized the gardens, still they were tolerably attractive, and had the recommendation of furnishing far better eatables and drinkables, at a much less cost, than the more ostentatious place of amusement. Really good punch, a slice of ham somewhat thicker than a wafer, and a fowl that *could* be carved, and eaten when carved, might be obtained at White Conduit House at a moderate price ; and if there were not as many fine folks there as might be seen at Vauxhall, that didn't matter to the citizens, who liked to smoke their pipes and quaff their punch comfortably, while their wives and daughters found plenty of amusement in listening to the strains from the orchestra, watching the fireworks, dancing, or exploring the shady walks with their gallants. In a word, White Conduit House was a huge suburban tavern, with extensive gardens attached to it. Like Vauxhall, it was in existence only a few years ago, though greatly on the decline, and was removed to make way for the street now occupying its site. Besides the house itself, at the period in question, there were two ornamental buildings, containing a handsome ball-room and refreshment-rooms, and in the midst of the gardens, which, as we have said, were prettily enough disposed with walks, shady groves, alcoves, pavilions, and orchestras, was a round fish-pond of considerable size, encircled by a high quickset hedge, in which were inserted boxes for the accommodation of the company—these boxes being adorned with paintings copied from the Dutch and Flemish masters. Of course, the fish-pond would have been incomplete without a boat or two, and these were not wanting. A large punt, provided with seats, rods, and fishing-tackle, was moored in the centre of the water. In another part of the garden was a spacious and well-kept bowling-green, with boxes at either end, and this bowling-green and the fish-pond constituted with many the chief attractions of the place. No ridottos al fresco, no festinos or masked balls, were given there as at Ranelagh or Vauxhall, but on special occasions there were fêtes, with fireworks, rope-dancing, and other amusements, highly satisfactory to the pleasure-loving citizens.

But the season was over, and the gardens, which had been thronged during the warm weather, were now deserted. The tavern, however, being noted for the excellence of its cookery and wines, still attracted many customers, and amongst others Wilkes and his friends, who, as the reader is already aware, held one of their clubs there.

This club—the "Capuchins"—had some peculiarities, which cannot very well be explained without describing its origin. Thus, then, it arose. Amongst Wilkes's possessions in Bucks were the remains of a once noble, and still remarkably picturesque, monastic establishment, called Medmenham Abbey, delightfully situated on the banks of the Thames between Henley and Marlow. No more charming retreat for one sated with pleasure and desirous of solitude could be found; and thither in summer, when town became insupportable, and the country was in perfection, Wilkes repaired. But it was not for temporary seclusion from society that the witty Sybarite sought the cells and cloisters of Medmenham; it was not for meditation, or study, or to bury himself in the surrounding groves; it was not for boating or fishing that he came there, but, we regret to say, for unrestrained indulgence in riot and excess. As may be supposed, he did not go there alone, but took with him persons of congenial taste, whose habits were as abandoned as his own, and scandalously were the venerable walls desecrated by the licentious crew. Comus and his rabble rout were not worse than Wilkes and his reprobate associates. In order to give piquancy to their orgies, they styled themselves Monks of Saint Francis, and assumed the garb of the brethren of that order. But devotional exercises, it will easily be conceived, formed no part of their practice. Their hymns were in praise of heathen deities, their worship at unholy shrines. Over the entrance of the hall wherein their revelries were held was inscribed the Rabelaisian motto, FAYS CE QUE VOUDRAS—and they acted up to it, giving free scope to their inclinations.

Of this society Wilkes was president, or, as he was styled by the brotherhood, Father Abbot.

Later in the year, when Medmenham Abbey lost its attractions, the Capuchins held occasional meetings in town, and had lately chosen White Conduit House for that purpose, being influenced in their choice by the good wines and good cookery to be had there, as well as by the complaisance of the host, Mr Tilbury, who made no objections to their proceedings. To speak truth, the Capuchins did not suit every house, and more than one tavern-keeper had declined the honour of their custom. However, as they paid well, and it was the dull season, and he had plenty of rooms to spare, Mr Tilbury not only consented to receive them, but gave them the best his kitchen and cellars could produce. Magnificent was the claret he set before them, and many a dozen of it was consumed by the jovial Capuchins, who sometimes prolonged their revels throughout the night.

From this it will be easily understood why Wilkes appointed White Conduit House as a place of rendezvous with Herbert. As the Capuchins supped there overnight, he could settle the affair without inconvenience. A duel would be an agreeable finish to the entertainment. He had merely to step on to the bowling-green to meet his man, and return to breakfast—victor, of course—and talk over the encounter with his friends. This was what he meant to do, but a little variation was made in the plan, as will more fully appear hereafter.

All the Capuchins—the club was limited to a dozen—were not assembled on the occasion; but the party consisted of Lord Sandwich, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Francis Dashwood, and of course Tom Potter and Wilkes. In accordance with the rules of the society they all wore the grey gowns proper to the religious order whose name they had borrowed, with cowls for the head and cords for the waist. Wilkes's attire as abbot differed so far only from the others in that his gown was made of somewhat richer material, while he wore an ornamental girdle round his waist. Over the chimney-piece was suspended the motto of the fraternity. A jolly night they had of it, surfeiting themselves with claret, and continuing their libations until they all fell asleep in their chairs.

And now to return to the opposite party. The fog was as dense as ever when the two conveyances reached White Conduit House, and it seemed scarcely possible that a duel could take place on a morning so unpropitious.

"If you fight at all, it must be by torchlight," observed Sir Felix. "It appears to get darker each moment. I can scarcely make out whether this is White Conduit House or not."

"All right, sir," cried a voice from some invisible person. "All right."

"Is that you, Mr Tilbury?" inquired the little alderman, as a stout personage presented himself before the chariot.

"Yes, yes, 'tis I, Sir Felix," replied the host. "Will it please you to alight? Mr Wilkes and his friends expect you."

"Oh, they're here, are they?" cried the little alderman, rather surprised. "I was afraid this bad morning might have kept them away."

"So it might," rejoined Tilbury, with a laugh; "but they took the precaution of coming overnight. They supped here, Sir Felix. You're not a monk, I suppose, sir?"

"A monk! What d'ye mean, Mr Tilbury? No, sir, I'm a member of the Established Church. A strange question!"

"You'll not think it so strange when you go into the house, Sir Felix, and see the gentlemen in their gowns."

"Night-gowns or morning-gowns, Mr Tilbury?"

"Their gowns serve both purposes, Sir Felix," laughed the host. "Pray come in, gentlemen. I'll show you the way."

By this time the whole party had alighted, and now followed the landlord into the house.

Calling for a pair of lighted candles, which were quickly brought him, Tilbury preceded them down a passage, and at last threw open the door of a large room, on entering which an extraordinary scene was presented to their gaze.

XVII.

THE "CAPUCHINS."

Round a table covered with wine-glasses and long-necked flasks, and on which candles were still alight, though well-nigh burnt down to the socket, sat five friars—for such they seemed—fast asleep. Being without their wigs, the close-shaven heads of the mock Franciscans materially aided their resemblance to the characters assumed.

"Who are these?" inquired Sir Felix, in a low voice.

"Don't you know, sir?" rejoined Tilbury. "These are Mr Wilkes and his friends."

"The deuce they are!" exclaimed the little alderman. "Bless my life! I could never have believed it."

"Stay a moment, Tilbury," said Tradescant, as the landlord was about to arouse the sleepers. "We'll have a jest with them. Give one of those swords to Mr Crutchet, Tip, and draw the other yourself. That's well. Now each of you follow my example." And drawing his sword, he held it in a menacing attitude over Wilkes's head.

Willing to humour the jest, Herbert stood with his drawn sword over Tom Potter, while Sir Felix assumed a similar position beside Lord Sandwich, and Crutchet and Tiplady presented their weapons at Dashwood and Stanhope.

No sooner was this done than Tilbury called out in a stentorian voice, "Wake up, gentlemen!" instantly rousing the sleepers, who were greatly startled by finding themselves thus menaced.

"Here, take my purse and spare my life!" cried Wilkes, fancying himself assailed by highwaymen.

"Ha! ha! don't you know me?" exclaimed Tradescant, lowering his sword, and indulging in a hearty fit of laughter, in which the rest of the company joined.

"Death and fiends! is it you, Lorimer?" cried Wilkes, starting to his feet with a furious expression of countenance. And he was proceeding in an angry strain, but finding his rage only increased the general merriment, he changed his tone, and inquired, "What brings you here at this unearthly hour?"

"Unearthly hour!" rejoined Tradescant, laughing. "Why, it's eight o'clock, the hour you yourself appointed for a meeting with my cousin Herbert."

"The deuce it is!" exclaimed Wilkes. "I must have overslept myself sadly. I fancied it was the middle of the night. It's Tilbury's fault—he ought to have roused me at seven o'clock. Is your cousin here?"

"Yes, there he is," replied Tradescant, pointing to Herbert.

"Pray make my excuses to him for my want of punctuality," pursued Wilkes. "It has been entirely unintentional on my part. Our club—the Capuchins—met here last night, and we drank rather too much claret."

"That will account for your sleeping so soundly," observed Tradescant. "And now, what's to be done?"

"Done! why, in the first place, we'll adjourn to the bowling-green and settle this little affair, and then return to breakfast."

"Easily said," rejoined Tradescant; "but there's a regular November fog out of doors which may hinder you. You won't be able to see each other."

"Diable!" exclaimed Wilkes. "That's unlucky!"

"With submission to both parties," interposed Sir Felix, "I would venture to suggest that the affair be postponed to a more favourable opportunity."

"Deferred, at all events, till the fog clears off," observed Tom Potter. "In an hour it may be all right. Breakfast first, and fight afterwards. That's my proposition."

"The fog isn't likely to clear off," observed Sir Felix. "We may be kept here till to-morrow. I vote that the duel be postponed."

"I object to any delay," said Herbert. "Be the weather what it may—and I own it is bad enough—I am ready to meet my adversary. Our chances are equal."

"Very true, sir!" cried Wilkes. "I object to delay as strongly as yourself. A fog will never stop two men really bent on fighting. I'll be with you in a trice."

And withdrawing behind a screen, he presently reappeared in his ordinary attire.

"Hear me, gentlemen," cried Sir Felix. "I protest against the course you are about to pursue. The fog is so thick that you might as well fight in this room with the lights put out."

"A capital suggestion!" cried Wilkes. "Suppose we do fight here. We have only to remove this table."

"The place is perfectly immaterial to me," observed Herbert. "Here, or elsewhere, I am at your service."

"But it's not immaterial to me," interposed Tilbury. "No fighting in this room, gentlemen. I don't mind it on the bowling-green, but if either of you should be killed here, it would be exceedingly unpleasant, and might ruin the custom of the house."

"Our host's reasons are unanswerable," observed Wilkes, with a laugh. "Nothing for it but the bowling-green. We'll there at once. Fetch a couple of lanterns, Tilbury."

"Bless you, sir, lanterns would be of no avail. There are some link-men outside. Shall I hire their flambeaux?"

"A bright idea!" exclaimed Wilkes. "About it at once, Tilbury, and bring the links to us in the garden. A duel by torchlight will be a novelty—something to talk about. But how is it I see you here, Lorimer, and apparently on my opponent's side? A day or two ago, you wouldn't acknowledge your kinsman. Now, you are hand and glove with him."

"Since we last met, Mr Wilkes, I am a good deal changed in many respects," replied Tradescant; "and I have discovered qualities in my cousin to which I was stupidly blind before. As this quarrel partly originated with me, or at least arose out of circumstances with which I was connected, I could wish it might be amicably arranged."

"I don't see how that can be," said Wilkes; "it has gone too far now."

By this time, the Capuchins having divested themselves of their gowns, and resumed their usual attire, the whole party were about to leave the room, when they were stopped by Sir Felix.

"I tell you what it is, gentlemen," said he. "I don't approve of this fighting in a fog. There's no precedent for such a duel. If fatal consequences ensue, the seconds will be hanged—yes, gentlemen, hanged. I must decline, therefore, to be a party to the encounter."

"Then I will take your place," said Tradescant. "I am willing to run the risk of a halter in such a cause."

"Mr Herbert must excuse me for deserting him at the last moment, but I really can't assist in such an irregular proceeding; and I must again protest—"

"Protest be hanged!" cried Tom Potter. "Come along! The affair ought to have been over by this time."

On this the whole party, with the exception of Sir Felix, quitted the room, and repaired to the garden.

The day had not improved. The fog was as dense as ever; orange-tawny in colour, and almost palpable. Even at a yard's distance a post could scarcely be distinguished.

"Upon my soul, it is a most execrable day!" exclaimed Wilkes. "I had no idea the fog was so bad. Shall we go on?"

"Certainly," replied Herbert. "The first step is taken. We must go through with it now."

"Be it so," cried Wilkes. "Keep near me. I'm acquainted with the place, and will endeavour to show the way."

With this he moved on, and the rest followed. But nothing is more deceptive than a fog, and though Wilkes made sure he was going in the right direction, he soon found himself on the edge of the fish-pond, into which another step would have plunged him.

"Halt!" he exclaimed. "We're wrong. I shall never be able to find the way without the torches. What the devil is Tilbury about that he doesn't send them?"

"Here they are!" exclaimed Tradescant, as lights were seen struggling through the gloom.

"Halloo! where are you, gentlemen?" shouted Tilbury.

"Here!—almost in the fish-pond," rejoined Wilkes. "Come to the rescue—quick!"

"Why, who the deuce are these?" cried Lord Sandwich, as the landlord came up, attended by five Capuchins, bearing torches. Each monk had his cowl drawn over his head, so as to shroud his visage.

"Zounds! the rascals have made free with our gowns," cried Dashwood.

"No other members of the club were expected," said Stanhope. "Who are these fellows, Tilbury?"

"Only some of my men, Sir William," replied the host. "I thought Mr Wilkes would like to have them arrayed in this way."

"You've taken a great liberty, Mr Tilbury," said Wilkes. "Death! sir, we shall never be able to wear our gowns again."

"I'm very sorry, sir," replied the host, in an apologetic tone. "I did it to please you. I'm something of an artist, sir, and I thought these monkish figures, holding torches, would give a picturesque effect to the conflict. I may be wrong, Mr Wilkes, but that was my motive."

"Gad! I think you are right, Tilbury," cried Lord Sandwich, laughing.

"Don't stop talking here, for heaven's sake!" exclaimed Tom Potter. "I'm half choked with this infernal fog. Show the way to the bowling-green, Tilbury, as quickly as you can—consistently with our safety."

XVIII.

A DUEL IN A FOG.

Directing the monkish torchbearers to march in advance, Tilbury put himself at their head, and proceeded cautiously along a covered walk leading to the bowling-green, which they luckily reached without further hindrance.

After a brief consultation between Tom Potter and Tradescant, the whole party proceeded to what they judged to be the centre of the green, and having ascertained by holding down the links that the ground was free from obstruction of any kind, they at once prepared for the business in hand; the first care of the seconds being to place the torchbearers in such a position that no undue advantage should be given to either side.

This was a task of some little difficulty, as the seconds could not exactly agree, but at length it was satisfactorily accomplished. Four of the monks were arranged in a square, one at each corner, and exactly four yards apart, while the fifth man was ordered to stand beside the combatants. Those at the corners were enjoined to remain perfectly motionless whatever might occur, but the central torchbearer might follow the movements of the combatants, but must be careful to keep out of the way, and distribute the light as fairly as possible. The links at each angle were to be held aloft, and not waved or shifted on any account, but the central torch was not to be so much elevated, and might be raised or lowered according to the exigencies of the moment, at the discretion of the bearer. Not a word was to be uttered by any of the torchbearers.

These regulations made, the two antagonists, who by this time had divested themselves of coat and waistcoat, stepped into the square, while the seconds retired, and the rest of the party, who looked on with considerable interest, grouped themselves around.

At this moment the scene was exceedingly picturesque, and must have delighted the artistic eye of Mr Tilbury. Seen through the thick tawny vapour with which the torchlight ineffectually contended, the monkish figures, cowled and gowned, had a strange fantastic effect, and looked like assistants at some dread and mysterious ceremonial. Viewed through the same opaque medium, and only imperfectly distinguished by the spectators, the chief actors in this singular scene had an equally ghostly appearance, and by a very slight stretch of the imagination might have been taken for phantoms of fierce duellists who had perished by each other's hands, and had been summoned from a bloody grave to renew their strife.

Unconscious, however, of the effect they produced on the beholders, and feeling strongly enough that they still belonged to this world, the two antagonists approached each other, and lighted by the central torchbearer, who carried out his instructions as carefully as he could, courteously saluted each other, taking off their hats and replacing them. They then beat the appeal and engaged.

No sooner did the combat begin than they both made the discovery that it was more difficult to fight under circumstances like the present than in the dark. Sight and judgment were alike at fault, and the well-meant efforts of the torchbearer only served to distract them still more.

"Confound you! keep that torch away. You put out my eyes," cried Wilkes.

After another moment, Herbert called out,

"Bring the torch nearer! I can't see."

Puzzled by these conflicting orders, the torchbearer stood still, not knowing what to do, when Tradescant shouted to him,

"Keep near them, will you, and don't attend to any orders but mine."

"Don't stir, sirrah!" cried Tom Potter. "The torch blinds my man."

"But mine can't see," cried Tradescant. "Go nearer, I tell you."

"Stay where you are, rascal!" roared Wilkes. "If you come any closer, I'll cut your throat when the fight's over."

"And I'll let light into your body unless you give us some here," cried Herbert.

"What am I to do, gentlemen?" said the perplexed torchbearer, drawing a little nearer. "I can't please you both."

But the combatants were now too much occupied with each other to notice him. A thrust in tierce by Wilkes was well parried by Herbert, and returned by him with such dexterity and quickness, that had there been light enough, the combat might have been suddenly terminated. As it was, Herbert's sword passed through his adversary's shirt near the right breast.

"A hit!" exclaimed Herbert.

"A mere scratch! I scarcely felt it. Look to yourself, sir!" cried Wilkes, delivering a thrust in carte, which was instantly parried and returned.

"They're well at it now," cried Dashwood. "Will you back your man for a hundred, Lorimer?"

"I'd back him and give odds, but I don't bet now, Sir Francis," replied Tradescant.

"So Tom Potter told me," said Dashwood; "but I didn't believe him."

"I wish I could see their play," said Lord Sandwich; "they seem to fence well."

"Wonderfully well, all things considered," replied Sir William Stanhope. "Wilkes seems to have found his match. I thought he would have settled it before this."

"I thought so," rejoined Tom Potter; "the young draper is a maître d'escrime."

"No jokes about drapers, Tom, if you please," said Tradescant. "Recollect, I'm one myself."

"Pshaw! you needn't carry on that farce here. We're not in Cheapside."

At this moment the clash of steel proved that the two combatants were sharply engaged.

"Sa! sa! there they go!" cried Potter—"thrust—parry—reposte—pass in carte—feint in carte over the arm—disengage—counter-disengage—thrust—recovery in carte."

"Why, you can't see them, Tom?" cried Lord Sandwich.

"No, but I can hear. I know exactly what they're about. There, one of them is beating fiercely with the edge of his sword on the other's blade. That must be Wilkes trying to disarm his antagonist."

"But he hasn't succeeded, you find," observed Tradescant; "and is now being attacked in his turn."

"Well done, draper!" exclaimed Potter. "The lad fights with spirit. Did you mark that? There was a thrust in tierce, parried with the prime, and followed by a strong smart beat on the feeble—down goes the sword."

"Whose sword?" cried Tradescant.

"The draper's," rejoined Potter. "Your man is worsted."

"I'm not sure of that," replied Tradescant.

"But I am," replied Potter.

"And they both hurried to the scene of strife, when Potter's conjecture proved to be correct. Herbert's sword had been beaten from his grasp.

"This wouldn't have happened if I had had more light," said the young man, angrily.

"Say you so?" cried Wilkes. "Then we'll have another bout. Take your sword, and begin again."

"No, no, this mustn't be," cried Tradescant.

"Why not?" rejoined Tom Potter. "It isn't for you to object if we are willing. You ought to be infinitely obliged by having a second chance allowed you."

"Why, so we are," said Tradescant; "but—"

"Now, sir," cried Wilkes, impatiently. "Either own yourself defeated and apologize for your insolence, or stand up again."

"I wouldn't have kept you waiting so long, sir," rejoined Herbert, "but I can't find my sword."

"Here are a couple of swords," said Tom Potter. "Take your choice."

And as Herbert took one of them, Wilkes flung aside his own weapon, and armed himself with the other.

"Now we are fairly matched—have at you, sir!" he cried, attacking Herbert.

And ere the seconds had retired, the combatants were again engaged, and evidently with greater fury than before.

"Come nearer, fellow," cried Wilkes to the torch-bearer; "you shan't complain of want of light this time, sir."

"Your politeness deserves a better return than I can make for it," rejoined Herbert.

"They're in earnest now," said Tom Potter. "Passes and parades are so rapid I can't follow 'em."

"The combat ought not to have been renewed," observed Tradescant. "Enough had been done before."

"Why didn't you make your man apologize, then?" said Potter. "But don't be uneasy. Wilkes will soon disarm him again. He's about it now, or I'm much mistaken. The draper disengages and thrusts—Wilkes counter-disengages and parries, forcing the draper's blade upwards with the fort of his own—a disarm after the parade."

"No such thing," replied Tradescant. "Both swords are still in hand, as you may hear. There was a half thrust and an appeal—an answer, a feint on the inside with a disengage on the outside, and a pass—ha! some one is hit!"

"By Heaven! 'tis Wilkes," cried Tom Potter, rushing towards the combatants, followed by Tradescant and the others.

They found Wilkes, scarcely able to stand, supporting himself with his sword, and pressing his hand against his breast, from which the blood was pouring, his shirt being dyed with the sanguinary stream. Beside him stood Herbert, whose looks showed his distress at the victory he had gained.

"I hope you are not much hurt, sir?" he inquired, in tones of the greatest anxiety.

"My business, I fear, is done," rejoined Wilkes, in a feeble voice; "but I freely forgive you, and beg you to take care of your own safety—oh!" And he would have sunk to the ground if Tom Potter had not caught him in his arms and sustained him.

"Here's a sad mischance!" exclaimed Tradescant. "But you know how averse I was to the renewal of the fight. I feared mischief would come of it. Would that my advice had been taken!"

"It was my fault," groaned Wilkes.

"No, no, you are far too generous, sir," cried Herbert. "I am to blame. I shall for ever reproach myself with what I have done."

"Away with you!" cried Wilkes. "My life is ebbing fast. Consult your own safety by flight."

"Yes, fly, sir, fly!" urged Tom Potter.

"What shall I do?—where shall I go?" cried the young man, distractedly.

"Hold a moment!" said Crutchet, stepping up to him.

XIX.

HOW A MARVELLOUS CURE WAS WROUGHT BY CANDISH.

"A SURGEON! a surgeon! In Heaven's name fetch a surgeon!" shouted Tradescant. "Will none of you stir?" he added to the torchbearers, who appeared perfectly apathetic, remaining in their places and holding up their flambeaux as if nothing had happened. "There ought to have been a surgeon in attendance."

"I'll bring one instantly," said the host.

"It is useless," said Wilkes, checking him. "I am past all surgical aid. My only concern is for my antagonist's safety. Isn't he here still? Take him away—take him away, Lorimer."

"Where's Mr Crutchet?" asked Tradescant.

"Here, sir," replied that personage.

"Go with Herbert," said Tradescant. "Take him to your own lodgings, till I see how this affair terminates."

"I don't think it likely to terminate very seriously, sir," replied Crutchet, in an under-tone.

"I'm of a different opinion. Mr Wilkes, I fear, is mortally wounded."

"He won't die of his present injuries, sir," rejoined Crutchet. "It's all a trick. Don't you observe how easily the other gentlemen take it? Some of 'em are laughing. The landlord is evidently in the plot. And as to those torch-bearers, they don't seem to care a button about the occurrence. A trick, sir, you may depend."

"By Heaven! I believe you are right," cried Tradescant. "Yet how can it have been managed? He must have been hit. Ah! I see! Tom Potter gave them fresh swords."

"Foils, I suspect, sir," rejoined Crutchet.

"That's soon found out," said Tradescant, snatching the weapon which Herbert still held in his grasp, and feeling the point. "You are right, Crutchet, it is a foil."

At this moment the voice of Sir Felix Bland was heard, calling out, "Here's a surgeon! Where's the wounded man? Where's Mr Wilkes?"

"This way, Sir Felix!" rejoined Tradescant. "This way!"

In another instant the little alderman became visible. With him was a little man, habited in black, whom Tradescant and Crutchet at once recognized as Candish. He was followed by a much taller and stouter personage, wrapped in an ample cloak, and so muffled up about the face that his features could not be discerned. Crutchet, however, had some suspicions of the identity of the latter.

"You are come in good time, Sir Felix," said Tradescant. "Poor Mr Wilkes, I grieve to say, is dangerously hurt."

"Sorry to hear it," rejoined the little alderman; "but here's a surgeon who will save him, if any man can."

"I'll do my best," rejoined Candish. "By your leave, gentlemen—by your leave!" he added, pressing towards Wilkes. "Bring the torch this way."

"No; keep it off!" cried Wilkes. "The light distresses me dreadfully"

"You must put up with a little inconvenience," said Candish. "Let me see the wound. Off with your shirt, sir."

"Off with yourself," rejoined Wilkes. "Don't disturb me. Let me die in peace."

"Excuse me, sir," said Candish, "my business is to prevent you from dying. This to begin." And he proceeded to tear open the other's shirt.

"Zounds, sir! what are you about?" roared Wilkes.

"Hold him fast, sir!" said Candish to Tom Potter. "Hold him fast, while I apply a potent styptic to the wound, that will stanch the bleeding in no time."

"Curse your styptic!" roared Wilkes. "I'll have none of it."

"Patience, my good sir—patience," cried Candish. "You are in my hands, and must submit to such treatment as I may deem advisable. I won't disguise from you that the application of this blue vitriol"—producing a phial as he spoke—"will give you some pain; but though sharp, it will be momentary."

"Blue vitriol!" exclaimed Wilkes. "Blue devils! you mean. Their chief seems to have visited me in person."

"Besides the blue vitriol," pursued Candish, "I have powdered agaric, a very powerful astringent."

"Powdered agaric! D'ye hear that?" cried Tom Potter, unable to refrain from laughing. "Apply the blue vitriol and agaric at once, sir. I'll hold the patient."

"At your peril!" roared Wilkes. "Let me go, Tom. Zounds, this is carrying the jest too far."

"A jest, Mr Wilkes!" exclaimed Candish. "Do you think I would jest with a patient in your condition?"

"In my condition!" echoed Wilkes, breaking from Potter. "'Sdeath, sir! I'm as free from injury as yourself. If you are what you profess, you ought to have discovered my wound to be a mere sham."

"The discovery was needless, Mr Wilkes," rejoined Candish. "I was aware of the deception from the first."

Loud laughter from those around, in which the torch-bearers joined, followed this confession of the trick.

"It is a great relief to me to find you are unhurt, Mr Wilkes," said Herbert; "but I should have had just reason to complain, if you had let me depart under the impression that I had killed you."

"I won't attempt to say anything in my defence," rejoined Wilkes. "But I'm glad you didn't go; and as the laugh has been decidedly against me, you will, perhaps, feel disposed to forgive me."

"Readily," returned Herbert. "And now, let me add, that I regret the observations I made upon you in the City Mall, and at which you took umbrage."

"Enough," said Wilkes. "I am perfectly satisfied. Animosity no longer exists on my part. Indeed, if you will permit me, I shall be happy to become your friend, for I admire your spirit." And he offered him his hand, which Herbert cordially grasped.

"We ought to thank you for your interference, Sir Felix," said Tom Potter, "since you have so pleasantly terminated the affair."

"Nay, sir, you must thank Mr Candish," rejoined the little alderman. "It's his doing—not mine."

"I have met Mr Candish before, I think," observed Potter. "Were you not at Picard's when the bank was broken, sir?"

"I was," replied Candish. "I had reasons for going there. But I mean it to be my last appearance in a gaming-house."

"As it shall be mine," observed Tradescant.

"'Tis a pity the Lord Mayor can't hear your praiseworthy determination, Lorimer," remarked Tom Potter, with a sneer. "It might have a good effect upon him, and reinstate you in his favour."

"The Lord Mayor *did* hear the observation, Mr Potter," said the stout personage standing by Sir Felix, unmuffling the lower part of his face as he spoke, and disclosing the features of Sir Gresham. "The Lord Mayor *did* hear it, sir," he repeated, "and it is likely to have the effect you anticipate, since he believes it to be sincere. You may be surprised to see me here, gentlemen," he continued, "and I owe you some explanation of my presence. I am not here to spy upon your actions, or to interfere with your proceedings. But having learnt that a duel was to take place on this spot between my nephew and Mr Wilkes, and suspecting, I confess, from the strange locality chosen, and from other reasons, which I need not particularize, that my nephew was to be the victim of some wild frolic, I took precautions—not to prevent the meeting, for I felt perfectly certain that Herbert was well able to defend his own honour—but to counteract any trick, should such be intended. These torchbearers are my men, and I trust Mr Tilbury will not incur your displeasure for the slight assistance he has rendered me in my scheme—assistance, I may add, which he could not very well refuse."

"We ought to express regret at having brought your lordship out at such an early hour, and on such a wretched morning," rejoined Wilkes; "but any circumstance which procures us the honour of your company must be gratifying to the Capuchins, and we trust, since you are here, you will do us the favour to stay and breakfast with us."

"I accept your invitation with great pleasure, Mr Wilkes," replied Sir Gresham. "Though I should not have ventured to sup with the jovial monks of St Francis, I am not afraid to breakfast with them. But you must let me eat and drink what I please."

"'Fays ce que voudras' is our device," rejoined Wilkes. "Your lordship shall do just what you will."

"Then I am with you," replied Sir Gresham; "and the sooner we sit down the better; for, in spite of the fog, I have a famous appetite."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Wilkes; "and I trust Mr Tilbury will use you well."

"His lordship shall have the best my house can furnish," replied Tilbury; "but this is an honour I did not expect."

"Make no apologies, sir," said Sir Gresham; "what will do for the epicurean Capuchins may very well do for a plain man like myself."

On this the whole party, lighted by the torchbearers, returned to the house, where an excellent breakfast was presently served, to which they sat down, and did full justice. Placed between Wilkes and Lord Sandwich, the Lord Mayor laughed as heartily at the piquant sallies and diverting stories of the ugly wit as the great moralist, Dr

Johnson, did on the memorable occasion when he dined in Wilkes's company. "Sir, there was no resisting the dog."

By the time the repast was over, the fog had cleared off, so that the Lord Mayor and Sir Felix Bland had a pleasant ride together to the Mansion House; while Tradescant and Herbert, accompanied by Crutchet, found their way back to Cheapside.

End of the Third Book.

BOOK IV.

THE MANSION HOUSE.

I.

HOW THE MANSION HOUSE WAS BUILT ON STOCKS-MARKET.

Considering the importance of the Corporation of the City of London, the large funds at their disposal, their fondness for show, and proverbial love of sumptuous banquets and entertainments—considering, also, the quasi-regal character of the Lord Mayor, the dignity he has to support, the duties to perform, and the princely hospitality he is bound to practise—considering the number of officers attached to his household, and the splendour of his retinue, it is scarcely credible that no fixed residence adapted to the requirements of so great a personage, and enabling him to exercise his high functions with becoming effect, should have been provided before the middle of the last century.

Yet so it was. Up to this date the Lord Mayor either occupied his own house, which in very rare instances offered adequate accommodation for his immense establishment, while it necessarily restricted the size and frequency of his entertainments, or he was compelled to use the hall of one of the twelve great City companies—an alternative, as will be apparent, fraught with many inconveniences.

Had we possessed a fine old mediæval mansion, picturesque in style, replete with historical associations, corresponding in some measure with the grand municipal halls to be met with on the Continent, or even with some of the ancient halls of the City companies—had such a mansion as this appertained to the Lord Mayor, and had it luckily escaped the conflagration of 1666, or been carefully restored or rebuilt, —how infinitely preferable would it have been to the present structure! But it is useless to sigh for the impossible. Let us be content with what we have got.

And now for the history of the present structure. In

1739, during the mayoralty of the Right Honourable Micaiah Perry, a resolution was come to by the municipal authorities to erect a house for their chief, wherein he might reside during his term of office, administer justice, uphold the dignity and importance of the Corporation, and practise the rites of hospitality in a manner commensurate with the wishes of the feast-loving citizens of London.

Several sites were proposed for the intended structure—amongst others, Moorfields, and a space at the east end of Paternoster-row, fronting Cheapside—but ultimately Stocks-market, at the north-east corner of Walbrook, was selected as being central, and contiguous to the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England.

Stocks-market, which derived its name from a pair of stocks anciently set upon the spot for the punishment of offenders, was one of the oldest markets in the city of London, having been established in 1282 by Henry de Walleis, then Mayor. Few would imagine that on the place where the ponderous Mansion House now stands, where thousands upon thousands pass and repass, where the pavement is always inconveniently crowded, and the street constantly stopped by carriages and public conveyances, little more than a century ago there was a pretty fruit-market, planted on the east side with rows of trees, having an antique conduit at the north end surmounted by an equestrian statue, and stalls where fruit and vegetables of the choicest kind were vended. An odd story is told about the equestrian statue. It was designed for John Sobieski, King of Poland, but was left on the maker's hands, and a statue of Charles II. being wanted by Sir Robert Viner after the Restoration, he availed himself of this image with commendable thrift, converting the warlike Pole into the Merry Monarch, and the turbaned Turk, whom his horse was trampling beneath its feet, into Oliver Cromwell.

Trees, stalls, conduit, and statue were removed in 1739.

On digging the foundation of the proposed building, the ground proved to be so full of springs that strong piles were needed for the support of the erection. Nearly fourteen years were occupied in the work—the first Lord Mayor who tenanted the Mansion House being Sir Crisp Gascoigne, in 1753.

Built of Portland stone, and possessing a noble portico of Corinthian columns, supporting a heavy pediment adorned with a bas-relief symbolical of the wealth and dignity of London; lighted by two tiers of large and well-proportioned windows beneath the portico, and by a lesser tier above it; with a grand entrance, approached on either side by a lofty flight of steps, protected by a balustrade; with a massive rustic basement, in the midst of which is a door leading to the kitchen and other offices,—the structure may be said to present an imposing if not a handsome façade. On either side, between Corinthian pilasters, is an immense Venetian window belonging to the Egyptian Hall.

At the period of which we write, and for many years afterwards, the roof was loaded with a heavy and unsightly upper story, termed, in derision, the "Mare's (Mayor's) Nest;" but this has been judiciously taken down, to the great improvement in the appearance of the building. The situation is too low and confined for a structure of such magnitude.

Passing through the grand entrance we come upon a spacious saloon—one of the finest features of the interior—adorned with Corinthian pillars, enriched by a carved wainscoting representing warlike implements, and lighted from above by a large dome and two lesser domes. At the south end of this lordly saloon lies the Egyptian Hall, so called because it was built after a design by Vitruvius bearing that designation. This is really a magnificent banqueting-hall, and worthy of the Lord Mayor. Upwards of ninety feet in length and sixty in breadth, it occupies the entire width of the house, and is lighted by the two great Venetian windows previously referred to.

On either side of the stately chamber are eight immense Corinthian columns, with two half columns of the same order at each end. Between the larger pillars are now placed pieces of sculpture, and when prepared for some grand entertainment, richly decorated, brilliantly illuminated, and filled with company, the effect of the hall is extraordinarily fine.

In this gorgeous banqueting-chamber are dispensed the hospitalities of the Corporation of the City of London, on a scale of splendour and prodigality not to be surpassed. Here its wealth of plate is displayed. Here the costliest delicacies and the choicest wines are abundantly supplied.

Here come the prince, the peer, the popular statesman, the great lawyer, the eminent divine, the naval and military commander, the foreign potentate and ambassador. Here the civic authorities are at home, and vie with their chief in attention to the City's guests. Since the first banquet given here in 1753 by Sir Crisp Gascoigne, how many state dinners have been served in this superb hall, how many illustrious orators spoken within it—with what hosts have its tables been crowded, and with what deafening cheers have its walls resounded!

The principal apartments on the first floor are the Justice-room, the Swordbearer's-room, and a room called Wilkes's Parlour, after the personage introduced in this story, who became at a later period of his career, during the mayoralty of his friend Crosby, more particularly identified with the Mansion House. The ball-room was formerly in the upper story. The state-rooms are handsome, but heavy and gloomy. The interior of the house may be described as a quadrangle built around the grand saloon, and connected by chambers and galleries.

Such is the residence provided by the City of London for their chief magistrate, at a cost of nearly £71,000. The plate cost more than £11,000, and the stock must be enormous, since an outlay of £500 in the purchase of plate is incumbent upon each Lord Mayor.

II.

HOW THE LORD MAYOR TOOK POSSESSION OF THE MANSION HOUSE, AND HOW HE DISCHARGED HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES.

For some months the Lord Mayor had now occupied the Mansion House.

Had he possessed no other merit than that of being a sumptuous host, Sir Gresham Lorimer would probably have been nearly as popular as he was with a set of men who, like the Corporation of the City of London, regarded unbounded hospitality as the first of virtues; but as his many good qualities became generally known, he rose in the esteem of all classes of his fellow-citizens. If he enjoyed all the pomps and pleasures of his high office, and revelled in its sweets, he at the same time shunned none of its labours and cares, but discharged his duties zealously and well.

Every claim which the public could have upon him was fulfilled. In turn he attended the several courts of judicature at which he was required to preside—the Hustings, the Court of Requests, the Lord Mayor's Court, the Court of City Orphans, the Court of Common Council, the Chamberlain's Court, and others, the mere enumeration of which would be tedious.

Beset as he was by a multiplicity of affairs, having many important questions to decide and many differences to adjust, Sir Gresham's judgment was generally correct, and his manner ever calm and conciliatory. Whether he had to receive the inquest of the City wards on Plough Monday; to go in state to the church of St Lawrence, Guildhall, on the first Sunday in Epiphany; to present an address to the throne in his gold gown, and attended by the Corporation; to proceed in state to Temple-bar and admit the heralds when war was proclaimed against Spain, and to cause the proclamation to be read at the Royal Exchange and elsewhere in the City,—whatever he had to do, he did it efficiently and well. The City was proud of him, and with reason.

Moreover, Sir Gresham's kindness and generosity endeared him to many who only approached him to seek assistance or relief. Easily accessible, he readily granted an audience to all who desired to see him, his best advice being given to those who sought it, while his affability and consideration were such, that though an applicant might be disappointed, he could not be offended.

Such, we may add, was the course pursued by Sir Gresham Lorimer throughout the whole term of his mayoralty.

On all hands it was acknowledged that the civic chair had never been more worthily filled than by its present occupant. High and low spoke well of him. All the distinguished personages with whom he came in contact, or whom it was his pride and privilege to entertain, were unanimous in his praise.

With the Sheriffs, the Aldermen, the Common-Councilmen, the Recorder, the Chamberlain, the Common-Serjeant, the Remembrancer, and all other officials immediately connected with him, he was equally popular. His enemies were few, his friends numberless.

The Lord Mayor's removal from his private residence to the Mansion House took place about a week after his installation. The Lady Mayoress and Millicent went with him, of course; and Prue, notwithstanding her aunt's opposition, was included in the party. Rooms were also assigned to Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris. Indeed, as Captain Chatteris was playing at hide and seek with his creditors, it behoved his wife—at least she thought so—to place herself under her father's protection.

The almost regal state kept up at the Mansion House, the vast retinue of servants, the receptions, the frequent and superb entertainments, suited the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters exactly. We cannot say they were particularly popular with their guests, the airs of superiority they gave themselves being well-nigh insupportable; but as their object was to overawe rather than to please, they may be said to have succeeded.

Assisted by her daughters, the Lady Mayoress kept up a kind of court, held levees and drawing-rooms, and had other receptions, to which all who paid her sufficient homage were invited, but from which those who incurred her displeasure were rigorously excluded. But these ostentatious displays were confined to the City folk. When ladies of rank honoured the Mansion House with their presence, they were received with overweening attention by its haughty mistress and her daughters. Lady Lorimer knew how to discriminate, she said, between really great people and pretenders, and sometimes submitted patiently to rudenesses equal to those she inflicted on others.

It was an amusing sight, on the evening of some grand entertainment, to see her ladyship in the plenitude of her charms, arrayed in all her finery, powdered, feathered, and loaded with jewels, with her two elder daughters standing beside her equally richly attired, and blazing in diamonds —it was amusing, we say, to see her as the different presentations were made, with what haughtiness she would return the courtesies of some wealthy citizen's wife and daughters, scarcely deigning to look at them, and what delight and empressement she manifested at the approach of a titled dame.

As her ladyship's days passed in a constant routine of this sort, and as she enjoyed some of the pleasures of sovereignty without any of its cares, she was for the time supremely happy. No doubt there were drawbacks to her entire felicity; but which of her sex, however fortunate or highly placed, can say she is perfectly happy? Lady Lorimer had reached the highest point of her ambition. Homage, little short of that offered to royalty, was paid her on all hands, not by the citizens merely, but by the most distinguished personages of the land; adulation, the most fulsome or the most refined, equally acceptable in either case, was lavished upon her. She was, unquestionably, the first lady in the City, and second to few out of it, she thought. At the Mansion House she was supreme, and when she went abroad in her superb chariot she attracted, or supposed she attracted, universal attention. What was left to attain? Her sole regret was that such a state of things could not endure for ever, and that a time *must* come—a great deal too soon!—when she would be dethroned—when this palace would be another Lady Mayoress's palace, and when all these bowing crowds, passing her by, would offer their incense to the new divinity. She wisely resolved, therefore, to make the most of her time.

Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris were just as happy as herself. Ever with their mother, they emulated, if not eclipsed, her splendour, shared her triumphs, and did not neglect to make conquests of their own at the same time. One or other always accompanied the Lady Mayoress in her chariot when she went abroad, and both being extremely handsome women, and magnificently dressed, they drew many an admiring eye to the splendid equipage.

Thus the days passed pleasantly with both ladies—so pleasantly, that, like the Lady Mayoress, they quite dreaded their termination, and, like her, determined to enjoy the passing moment.

Mrs Chatteris was so much engrossed by the round of amusements in which she was engaged, and had so many other distractions, that she had seldom a thought to bestow on poor dear absent Tom.

Millicent and Prue likewise greatly enjoyed their residence at the Mansion House. Perhaps there was rather too much form and ceremony for them—perhaps, also, the entertainments were too frequent, and on too grand a scale to suit them—still there was so much excitement and variety, that they could not fail to be pleased.

As almost everybody of consequence was invited at some time or other to the Mansion House, the two girls had an opportunity of seeing most of the celebrities of the day, and in some instances of becoming acquainted with them; and as by this time Milly had got rid in a great measure of her shyness, while Prue was lively and talkative enough, both were very much admired—more so, indeed, than was altogether agreeable to Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, who wondered what people could see in either of them.

Little attention was shown them by the Lady Mayoress, who did not attempt to conceal her dislike of her niece; but this neglect was more than repaired by Sir Gresham, who took especial pains to bring them forward, introducing everybody to them whom he thought they would like to know.

Let us add, that their amiability and good nature soothed and conciliated many who were offended by the haughtiness of the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters.

III.

A CHANGE IS OBSERVABLE IN PRUE.

One circumstance connected with his niece struck the Lord Mayor as singular, and he did not very well know how to account for it.

No sooner was she launched into society than she became easy and well bred. Her rusticity disappeared as if by magic. Either she required no instruction, or there was nothing to teach. Heightened by the rich attire, for which she was indebted to the kindness of her uncle, her charms of person seemed to improve, and her deportment was so graceful that Sir Gresham could not help commenting upon it.

"Why, where have you learnt all those graces, niece?" he said. "You don't look like a country girl at all. I didn't suppose you had seen society enough at York to form your manner as it seems formed?"

"You flatter me, uncle," she replied, blushing. "Since my arrival in town you have given me abundant opportunities for observation, and I have had my eyes about me, I can assure you."

"You have used them to some purpose," replied the Lord Mayor.

Tradescant was quite as much surprised as his father by Prue's sudden and remarkable alteration of manner, and its effect upon him was stronger than on Sir Gresham. But if the young man thought her wonderfully improved in some respects, there was one change which he did not consider was for the better—she was decidedly more distant towards him, and though amiable as ever, sought to make him understand that if he fancied she felt any tender interest in him he was mistaken.

"Deuce take the girl! I can't understand her," he mentally ejaculated. "There's no denying that she looks handsomer and more refined than she used to do, but I liked her better as she was."

If we could suspect Prue of any design of fixing her once fickle, and it might be still inconstant cousin, no better plan could have been devised than that which she pursued. In proportion as she became cold and distant Tradescant's ardour increased, until at last the anticipated crisis arrived, and the conquering girl had him at her feet. He told her in the most passionate terms that he loved her, that he had never loved any one but herself, and could not exist without her.

Prue laughed outright at this declaration, which was made during an evening party at the Mansion House in one of the galleries leading to the ball-room, and told him, in reply, that, in spite of his professions, she was by no means sure of his sincerity; that as to his assertion that she was the first object on which his heart had been fixed, she knew that to be false; and before she could give him the faintest hope of a return of regard she must have proof of his constancy.

What proof did she require? he asked. Her answer was, that she would consider and let him know. But, when subsequently pressed, she refused to decide, so that Tradescant was as far from the attainment of his wishes as ever.

But the flame now raging in his breast was fanned into fury from another quarter. A girl so handsome as Prue could not fail to attract admirers. She had plenty, and some of them, though they received no more encouragement than Tradescant—perhaps not half so much—paid her marked attention. It soon became quite clear that it only rested with herself to make a very advantageous match, and one love-sick swain, a good-looking youth, and of good expectations, the son of Alderman Cracraft, applied to the Lord Mayor, entreating him to plead his cause with his niece.

In compliance with the young spark's request, Sir Gresham broached the matter to Prue, but her reply was such as at once to crush the aspirant's hopes.

When her uncle, with evidently warm interest, inquired whether her affections were entirely disengaged, she blushed, and begged him not to question her too closely. So Sir Gresham discreetly forbore.

Amongst those who accompanied the Lord Mayor to the Mansion House was Candish. The old man was placed upon the household, and proved so trustworthy and serviceable, that he was regarded by the Lord Mayor as his right hand.

IV.

HOW TRADESCANT REGAINED HIS FATHER'S FAVOUR.

Tradescant and Herbert still lodged at the house in Cheapside, though they dined daily at the Lord Mayor's table, and rarely missed any entertainments given at the Mansion House.

From the period at which we last left him to the time when we resume our story, Tradescant had been sedulous in attention to business, and had become so steady and industrious, that there seemed little danger of a relapse into his former idle courses. Manfully resisting all temptations to which he was exposed—and they were not few—he stuck to his post, and soon mastering the details of the business, took upon himself the management of the concern, and, if Crutchet's word were to be taken, conducted it as well as Sir Gresham himself could have done.

Long before this, we need scarcely say, a reconciliation had taken place between the reformed prodigal and his father. Crutchet had not failed to acquaint Sir Gresham with his son's regular attention to business, and Candish had satisfied him that the young man had abandoned all his idle and profligate courses. Nevertheless, Sir Gresham gave no sign of relenting until sufficient time had elapsed to afford reasonable assurance that his son's reformation was complete.

One day, when Tradescant was alone in the room adjoining the counting-house, in which he now constantly sat, and busily engaged in making up some accounts, Sir Gresham entered with Crutchet, and closed the door softly after him. Not being aware that it was his father who had come in, Tradescant continued his work without looking up.

"There, sir, there's a sight to do you good!" whispered Crutchet.

Sir Gresham made no reply, for his heart was too full to allow him to speak.

A moment afterwards Tradescant raised his eyes, and perceiving his father, started up and threw himself at his feet.

"Have I your forgiveness, sir?" he cried. "Am I once more your son?"

"Again my son, and dearer to me than ever," replied the Lord Mayor, raising him and tenderly embracing him. "Oh, Tradescant, what joy it is to find you thus worthily employed! How great is my satisfaction in this change! Come to my heart, my dear boy!—come to my heart!" And he strained him once more to his breast.

For some moments there was a silence, which was broken at last by a sort of hysterical laugh proceeding from Crutchet, who vainly attempted to call out "huzza!" and almost choked himself by the effort.

"Give me your hand, Crutchet—give me your hand!" said the Lord Mayor, in a voice of deep emotion. "I owe my boy's restoration mainly to you."

"Yes, sir, I owe more to Mr Crutchet than I shall ever be able to repay," said Tradescant. "Had I listened to him you would never have had any cause of complaint against me. I will make no professions; but you may believe me when I affirm that I am heartily ashamed of my follies—to give them their mildest term—and that I will never repeat them."

"Say no more!—say no more!—I am perfectly satisfied," cried Sir Gresham. "All is forgiven—all shall be forgotten."

"I shall never forget this scene to my dying day," said Crutchet, taking off his spectacles, and applying a handkerchief to his eyes.

"A word more ere I dismiss this subject for ever," pursued the Lord Mayor. "All your debts are paid, so that you are free from embarrassment of any kind."

"As I trust henceforward to remain!" exclaimed Tradescant.

"Go on as you have begun," continued his father. "Attend to business as sedulously as you are now doing, and in another year you shall be master of this concern."

"Promise me nothing till you find I deserve it, sir," replied Tradescant. "But if I can place any dependence on myself I won't disappoint you."

"He won't, Sir Gresham, I'm sure he won't," said Crutchet.

"I believe you," said the Lord Mayor. "And now, go to work, my boy, and God bless you!"

This was all that passed between them on the subject.

V.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT CONFIDES THE STATE OF HIS AFFECTIONS TO CRUTCHET; AND FROM WHICH IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HERBERT MUST BE TAKING TO IDLE HABITS.

Months went by and found no change in Tradescant. The business improved under his management, and every one in the establishment was obliged to confess that a better system and more regularity had been introduced since he had assumed the control of affairs.

"Why, sir, you're a genius! a positive genius!" exclaimed the delighted Crutchet, as they were talking over a successful transaction one morning in the room behind the counting-house. "You've done wonders. I always knew it was in you, but I feared I mightn't live to see it brought out."

"Ah! my good old friend!" rejoined Tradescant, "I hope you may live to see me realize all your kindly expectations. But I owe this to you. What should I have been without you?"

"Well, I did the best I could—that I can safely say," rejoined Crutchet; "but though I had the will I hadn't exactly the power. No, sir, the person who made you what you now are is your cousin Prue. She did it, sir—she alone—no one else can claim any merit."

"I feel how much I owe her," sighed Tradescant.

"Then why not show your gratitude, sir?—why not make her some return?"

"So I would, if I knew how, Crutchet."

"I'll tell you how, sir. Take her to Bow Church, where your father and mother were married. Bring her back here as your bride."

"I should like nothing better, Crutchet," responded the young man.

"Then do it without delay."

"But I don't think she likes me. Ever since she went to the Mansion House she has been extraordinarily cool towards me—quite changed—and repels my advances in a way that almost distracts me."

"Don't be disheartened, sir. Put the question to her in a plain, straightforward, business-like manner that can't be misunderstood, and she'll say 'yes' readily enough, I'll warrant her."

"I have put the question several times, Crutchet, and have been as constantly baffled. She won't give me a direct answer, so that I am just where I was at first. For the last three months she has led me a pretty dance, and more than once I've resolved to break with her, but I never can. I did think of absenting myself from the Mansion House to-day, but I should be wretched if I did so. Not having seen much of her of late, you don't know what a fine lady she has become, and how surprisingly handsome she looks. I almost wish she were not so good-looking, for she attracts a host of admirers, and one of them may carry her off. It's true she has refused young Cracraft, and Mr Deputy Hodges, and half a dozen others, I believe."

"She'll refuse 'em all," rejoined Crutchet. "She means to have you, and no one else—only she'll take her own time about it."

"I wish I could persuade myself so," observed Tradescant; "but I can't free myself from anxiety."

"It's the nature of lovers to be anxious, sir—at least, so I've heard, for I can't speak from experience, never having been in love myself. But cheer up! all will come right in the end. If you want an advocate with Miss Prue—though I don't think one can be needed—why don't you enlist your sister in your behalf?"

"I've tried to do so, but Milly declines to interfere."

"Then, take my word, it's a plan made up between 'em. Miss Prue is playing with you as a fisherman plays with a trout he has safely hooked—but try to escape, and she'll land you fast enough."

"If I thought so!—But no! I daren't make the attempt."

There was a pause, after which Crutchet remarked with some hesitation, "Talking of Miss Prue, sir, have you remarked that her brother is not quite so attentive to business as he used to be?"

"I have noticed the change, Crutchet—much to my regret—though I've said nothing about it to you. I hope Herbert isn't going to take the part I've thrown up."

"Mercy on us! I hope not," exclaimed Crutchet, with a countenance of surprise and alarm. "But what makes you have any such fear?"

"I'll tell you. He has lately become intimate with Mr Wilkes, Tom Potter, and the set who helped to get me into difficulties, and if he doesn't take care they'll entangle him."

"He hasn't much to lose, that's one comfort, sir," observed Crutchet.

"True," replied Tradescant; "but neither had I, and yet—I shame to say it!—I managed to get rid of a vast deal of money."

"Mr Herbert won't have the same chance, sir, I shan't lend him any."

"I hope not, Crutchet. Take care of what you've got, and never risk it again. But I sincerely trust he won't become a gamester, or take to dissolute ways. I regard him as a brother, and should feel it deeply if he went wrong."

"I think you may make yourself easy about the gambling, sir. Mr Herbert's a great deal too cautious, in my opinion, to play deeply, or to play at all. Neither do I think it likely, from his general habits, that he will plunge into any excesses, but what I lament is that he has begun to show a decided distaste for business—that he dresses more extravagantly than he used to do, and gives himself more airs."

"Bad symptoms, Crutchet—bad symptoms!" exclaimed Tradescant. After a pause, as if he had suddenly formed a resolution, he added, "I'll speak to him. Is he in the counting-house now?"

"Lord love you! no, sir—not he! He seldom makes his appearance before twelve o'clock, and not always then. But you'll find him in his own room, if you want to see him. His valet, Tiplady—your valet once, sir—came down a short time ago, to inquire for letters and the morning paper, and said his master was then at his toilette."

"At his toilette at this hour! Why, he's as bad as I was. And then to think of his engaging that pert rascal, Tip, whom I was only too glad to get rid of! What does a man of business want with a valet?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, sir," replied Crutchet. "I don't want one, and if I did, I should certainly never engage such a conceited coxcomb as Tiplady."

"Come with me to this silly fellow's room, Crutchet, and let us try to reason him out of his folly."

"With all my heart, sir," replied the other.

VI.

TEL MAITRE, TEL VALET.

Since the Lord Mayor's removal to the Mansion House, a suite of handsome apartments had been allotted to Herbert, and in one of these Tradescant and Crutchet found Tiplady lolling upon a sofa, and reading the morning paper. The valet either did not hear them enter, or pretended not to do so, for he continued his occupation, until Tradescant called out, "When you have finished with the newspaper, sirrah, I will thank you to let your master know that Mr Crutchet and myself desire to speak with him."

"Pray excuse me, sir," replied the unabashed valet, springing to his feet and bowing. Tiplady, we may remark, was very smartly attired in one of the suits of clothes bestowed upon him by Tradescant. Still keeping his eye upon the paper, he went on: "I was reading the list of the eminent personages who kissed hands at St James's yesterday, on being created English peers. I delight in court news, sir. Shall I run over the list?"

Tradescant replied by a gesture of impatience.

"Here's a piece of intelligence that can't fail to interest you, sir," pursued the imperturbable valet. "'Approaching Festivities at the Mansion House. The Easter Banquet, we understand, will be on a scale of unprecedented magnificence. Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of York and Cumberland, with the First Lord of the Treasury and the rest of the Cabinet Ministers, and several of the chief nobility, will honour the Lord Mayor with their company on the occasion. The Ball to be given by the Lady Mayoress will be unusually brilliant.' "

"Put down the paper, rascal, and do as I have bidden you," cried Tradescant.

"Allow me to read you one more interesting paragraph," persevered the valet. "This is worth listening to. 'Curious Confession—A Man wrongfully imprisoned.—James Archer, recently executed at Chester for forgery, confessed that the crime that weighed heaviest on his conscience was having been instrumental in causing the wrongful imprisonment of a fellow-clerk. As the circumstance occurred nearly forty years ago, and the unfortunate man is presumed to be dead, it is too late to make any reparation for the terrible injury done him.' There's more of it, sir."

"I won't hear it," cried Tradescant, snatching the paper from him. "Go to your master at once."

"There's no sort of hurry, sir," replied Tiplady. "My master won't have done dressing for ten minutes."

"Tell him I'm here, and that will make him more expeditious."

"I don't think it will, sir. He's nearly as particular about his toilette as you used to be when you were—I beg pardon, sir—I was merely about to observe, that my master generally takes his time."

"So do you, rascal," cried Tradescant, "and that of other people as well. Do as I bid you without delay, or I'll quicken your movements."

"I'm extremely reluctant to disturb my master," rejoined Tiplady. "But I suppose I must do it."

And moving leisurely towards the door of an inner chamber, he went in.

"And this is the way, I suppose, that that impudent puppy treated people when he served me," remarked Tradescant. "A proof, I fear, that in his master I shall find a reflex of my former self."

Crutchet said nothing, but shook his head ominously.

At this moment Tiplady reappeared.

"Just as I expected, sir," said the valet. "My master has made but little progress with his toilette, and will be obliged to detain you longer than may be agreeable. Some other time, perhaps, may suit you better. Excessively sorry, sir—excessively sorry!" he added, looking as if he wished to bow them out.

But in this he was disappointed, for Tradescant threw himself on the sofa, saying, "I will wait. I mean to see him now."

"Quite right, sir," observed Crutchet, in a tone of approval.

"But my master is expecting a gentleman to call upon him every minute, sir—every minute," rejoined the valet.

"The rascal evidently wants to get rid of us," observed Tradescant aside to Crutchet. "Harkye, sirrah!" he added to Tiplady. "Whom does your master expect? Mr Potter, or Mr Wilkes, eh?"

"No, sir, but both those gentlemen were here yesterday. Odd, sir, that most of your old acquaintance should now be my master's acquaintance! But the gentleman he now expects is a stranger—a Mr Winter—from Yorkshire, I believe, sir,"

"Winter! I never heard of him," rejoined Tradescant. "Who and what is he?"

"Oh lud, sir, I can't enlighten you; but I believe he's elderly, and my master told me to be particularly civil to him—that's all I know."

"Well, perhaps we shall see him," observed Tradescant.

"Then you are determined to wait, sir?"

"Quite determined. I shan't stir till I see your master."

"Very good, sir. But suppose Mr Winter should come?"

"Suppose he should! Show him into another room."

"Contrary to orders, sir. I was expressly told to bring him here. If you want a private interview, I would really recommend you to postpone it to a more convenient opportunity. After my master has done with Mr Winter, he is going with Sir Felix Bland to St Mary-axe, to call on Mrs Walworth and her daughter."

"What! has he renewed his intimacy with them?" cried Tradescant.

"Perhaps I ought not to have mentioned it," replied Tiplady; "but i'faith! my master is very attentive to Miss Walworth, and it wouldn't surprise me," taking out a snuff-box and helping himself to a pinch of rappee, "it wouldn't surprise me if they made a match of it, after all."

"But it would surprise me, rascal," cried Tradescant, angrily. "And I desire you won't take any more liberties with your master's name, or with that of any lady with whom he may be acquainted. Leave the room instantly, sir."

And seeing he was in earnest, the valet thought proper to comply, though he marched out very consequentially.

"I hope this last piece of information is not correct," observed Tradescant. "I should be sorry if Herbert were to marry Alice Walworth. I had other views in regard to him."

"I can partly guess what they were," said Crutchet; "and I trust they may yet be realized."

At this moment the door of the inner room opened, and the young gentleman under discussion came forth.

VII.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT READS HERBERT A LECTURE.

HERBERT looked extremely well, and had now quite the air of a man of fashion. There was no foppery in his manner, but he was attired in a light-blue velvet coat laced with silver, and having silver button-holes, and the rest of his costume was equally elegant.

"I must apologize for detaining you," he said, saluting them, "but I was in the very midst of my toilette when you were announced."

"I must compliment you upon the result, Herbert," replied Tradescant. "You put us quiet folk to shame. You and I seem to have changed parts like two actors in a comedy."

"Faith, it looks very much like it," replied Herbert. "Your former valet, Tip, is now my valet. Your former tailor, Buckmaster, is now my tailor. Your friseur, Le Gros, is my perruquier. And some of your old friends are now my friends."

"The latter, I fear, will do you no good," replied Tradescant gravely. "You once cautioned me against them, Herbert, and in return I caution you."

"I find them very amusing," said Herbert.

"Yes, they are amusing, I admit, but therein lies the danger. They'll soon laugh you out of your good habits and principles, lead you into a hundred needless expenses, make you ashamed of your business, and teach you to game."

"Oh no, they've tried that," replied Herbert, "but it won't do with me. Now and then, indeed, I play a rubber at whist—but never for more than guinea points."

"Guinea points!" exclaimed Crutchet, holding up his hands. "Monstrous!"

"And then I never bet—so I can't lose much."

"Excuse me, Herbert," said Tradescant, with increasing gravity, "if I venture to tell you that your present mode of life is irreconcilable with the situation you occupy in this house, and that something more is expected from you by my father than you seem inclined to perform."

"Very justly remarked, sir—very justly remarked," observed Crutchet.

"Really, my dear Tradescant," said Herbert, in a careless tone, "if the object of your visit was merely to read me a lecture, you needn't have given yourself the trouble to wait so long. Any other time would have done for its delivery. You manage the concern so admirably yourself, that I am relieved from the necessity of any particular attention to it."

"There you're wrong, sir," observed Crutchet. "There's plenty for you to do, if you will but do it."

"I am fully equal to the management of the concern, Herbert," said Tradescant, "but that is not the point. You must either work or play—take your choice. My father, as you are aware, at the end of the year, contemplates taking you into partnership—or rather, I imagine, retiring, and leaving the concern to me and you. Self-interest, then, must make it clear that you are pursuing the wrong course at present, and may forfeit the chance."

"I am greatly beholden to my uncle for his consideration," pursued Herbert, "and also to you, Tradescant; but I scarcely think I shall take advantage of the offer."

"What, decline a partnership in one of the first houses in the City!" exclaimed Crutchet. "Such folly is incredible."

"What on earth do you mean to do?" demanded Tradescant.

"Hum!—I hardly know. Perhaps marry."

"Go through the same process that I did with Alice Walworth, eh—and experience the same result?"

"No, I shall go more prudently to work than you did. So you have heard that I have renewed my intimacy in that quarter, eh? Alice and I have made up our differences, and are better friends than ever."

"And can you really think of marrying her, Herbert?"

"Why not? You once thought of marrying her yourself. I needn't specify her recommendations."

"She won't suit you. Better stick to business. In due time, I have no doubt, you will find a suitable wife, calculated to make you happy."

"Excellent advice, sir!" exclaimed Crutchet, approvingly. "It does me good to hear you talk thus."

"It makes me smile," observed Herbert. "To speak truth, I'm not so fond of business as I used to be. I cannot spend all my life in a counting-house, talking to bookkeepers and shopmen, examining accounts, and occupying myself with stupid correspondence. "Upon my soul, I can't do it."

"Hear me, Herbert," said Tradescant. "I give you my word that I was never half so happy in my days of indolence and so-called luxury as I am now. Formerly I was listless and indifferent to everything, and required constant excitement of the strongest kind to rouse me into life. Pleasure palled upon me. Then, I could hardly get through the day—now, it is too short for what I have to do. Having become practically aware of the difference between an idle and active existence, even as affecting the spirits, to say nothing of the beneficial results of the latter course, I wouldn't be what I was again for worlds. You don't believe me now, but you'll find it out in time."

"Well, perhaps I may," said Herbert.

"What a change for the worse, to be sure!" groaned Crutchet. "Why, when you first entered the counting-house, which you now profess to dislike so much, I thought we had got a treasure, and I told your uncle so. 'Mr Herbert's a steady, hard-working young man, sir,' I said to him; he'll make his way in the world.' What sort of character must I give you now?"

"Just such as I deserve," replied Herbert, laughing; "neither better nor worse. Don't conceal anything from my uncle, I beg of you."

"Must I tell him you have become too fine to attend to the shop; that you come late and leave early; that you have ceased to look into the books and reply to the correspondence; that you scarcely deign to speak to the bookkeepers, and never address the shopmen or 'prentices? Shall I tell him all this?"

"Tell him whatever you please, Crutchet," replied Herbert, indifferently.

"Then I know what the result will be," observed Crutchet. "Be advised by me. Change your plans. It won't do, sir—it won't do."

"Is this the way the worthy fellow used to preach to you formerly, Tradescant?" inquired Herbert. "If so, no wonder you found him a bore."

"Mercy on us! that this dreadful malady should break out in another member of the family!" mentally ejaculated Crutchet.

"It has been one of my chief regrets that I so little heeded what Mr Crutchet said to me," said Tradescant, in a tone of stern rebuke; "but if you have any regard for my father's good opinion, you will alter your present mode of life."

"I have the greatest regard for my uncle," replied Herbert, "and should be sorry to sink in his opinion. But I have no idea of deceiving him, and, therefore, beg Mr Crutchet to tell him the exact truth respecting me."

"I should be loth to communicate such disagreeable intelligence to Sir Gresham, sir. I know it would greatly surprise and shock him."

"I am sure it would," said Tradescant. "As long as possible he must be spared the pain of the disclosure. I therefore forbid you to say anything about it to him for the present, Crutchet. Herbert, it is to be hoped, will not be so ill-advised as to destroy his future prospects. I must get your sister to exert her influence over you," he added to his cousin.

"Prue is aware of my dislike to the business," observed Herbert; "and she is also aware of my intention to withdraw from the concern."

"But she cannot approve of such a step?" cried Tradescant, in surprise.

"She does not express any opinion. She leaves me to act as I think proper."

"You amaze me! She cannot be indifferent on a point of such vital importance to yourself. She must know that you are throwing away a fortune, and that you have nothing else to fall back upon."

"Nothing except a wealthy marriage," rejoined Herbert, laughing. "She knows all; and has perfect confidence in my judgment."

"More than I have," muttered Crutchet.

At this moment the door was opened by Tiplady, who announced Mr Winter.

VIII.

MR WINTER.

The elderly individual who entered the room immediately after this announcement, had quite the air of a country gentleman. His round, ruddy countenance, redolent of health and good humour, his old-fashioned gold-laced cocked-hat, his plain bob-wig, his ample cravat, his loose green weather-stained riding-coat, and brown top-boots, which had evidently seen some service, proclaimed his condition. Though evidently nearer seventy than sixty, he did not seem to have an ailment, but looked good for another ten years. From the jovial expression of his features, and the portliness of his person, it was clear he was no enemy to good cheer, but he must have managed by hard exercise —on horseback no doubt—to set gout and other disorders at defiance. The sonorousness of his voice and the heartiness of the laughter in which he constantly indulged showed that his lungs were unimpaired. His features were handsome and prepossessing, and it was really pleasant to look upon such a hearty, hilarious old fellow. He carried a gold-headed cane, but more for ornament than use (probably, in lieu of the customary riding-whip), since it was manifest, from his erect carriage and the sturdiness of his gait, that he did not need its support.

On entering, he took off his cocked-hat, and bowed to each of the company.

"Welcome, sir!—welcome to town!" Herbert cried, hastening towards him, and shaking hands with him very heartily. "I hope you have had a pleasant journey."

"Pretty middling, lad, pretty middling," replied the old gentleman. "Two days in a po'-chaise is more than I can stand. I made the lads drive as fast as they could, but they had but poor cattle. Rot me! if I was ever so tired in my days. I've not got the stiffness out of my legs and back yet. I was stopped by the Flying Highwayman near Barnet. The rogue got ten guineas out of me, but I managed to hide my pocket-book. He rode a thorough-bred bay—a racer, I should think, by the look of him. The horse took my fancy so much that I offered to buy him, but the rascal swore he wouldn't sell him for a thousand pounds. Maybe, the horse was worth that to him. Gad! how I wished for my blunderbuss to settle accounts with the villain. However, here I am, safe and sound, and ready to take my seat in the House. You heard of the result of the contest? Two hundred a head of my opponent, Sir Mark Coverdale. Think of that, my boy. And how are you, Herbert? Oddsflesh! they've smartened you up in Lunnun. Why, you're grown quite a beau—ha! ha! ha!"

And he burst into a laugh, so loud and boisterous as to prevent reply from Herbert. On recovering himself, the old gentleman went on: "Body o' me! how Lunnun is changed to be sure! When I first caught sight of the great smoky City from Highgate-hill, I thought the place looked just as I had left it upwards of forty years ago, but as I sallied forth from the Saracen's Head this morning to look about me, hang me if I knew where I was, or which way to go—everything seemed so strange. Bow Church, it's true, looks much as it did—and this house doesn't seem greatly changed—I recollect it in old Tradescant's days—but farther on, when I looked for Stocks-market, where I used to buy strawberries and cherries when a boy, and stare at old Rowley's statue over the conduit, when I looked for the old place I found the Mansion House. Now, the Mansion House may be a fine building—it is a very fine building—but I would rather have seen the old market."

There was something in Mr Winter's voice, looks, and manners, that produced an indescribable effect upon Tradescant. He fancied he had seen him before, but as the old gentleman declared he had not been in Town for upwards of forty years, that was impossible. Again, on scrutinizing Mr Winter's features, he thought he could trace a likeness between him and Herbert, and even between the old gentleman and his own father—but this must surely be imaginary.

But if Tradescant was puzzled, Crutchet was still more so. From the moment of the stranger's entrance, his curiosity had been strongly excited concerning him. Keeping his eyes upon him, he listened attentively to all Mr Winter said, and the old gentleman's observations increased his astonishment and perplexity.

At last he whispered to Tradescant, "If I didn't know your uncle, Godfrey Lorimer, was dead, I should declare he was standing before us."

"Oddsflesh! Herbert, you are mighty well lodged here, I must say," observed Mr Winter, glancing admiringly round the room. "Ah! there's a portrait of Sir Gresham over the fireplace, I perceive; very like, I'll be sworn, though I haven't seen him since he was younger than you are. And how is he?—how is your worthy uncle?"

"Never better, sir — he bears the fatigues of office wonderfully well," replied Herbert. "But allow me to present you to his son," he added, leading the old gentleman towards the others. "Tradescant, give me leave to introduce to you Mr Winter—my maternal uncle and guardian."

"His maternal uncle!" mentally ejaculated Tradescant; "that explains the likeness I detected between the old gentleman and himself, but not between the old gentleman and my father. Sir, I am very glad to see you—very glad indeed," he added, shaking hands cordially with Mr Winter.

"Sir, you are exceedingly obliging," rejoined the other. "Let me look at you for a moment, he added, scanning the young man's features. "Ay, ay, a handsome lad," he muttered, "a handsome lad! but not much of a Lorimer—must be like his mother. I've heard of you, sir, from my—from Herbert here—but zookers! you don't answer a bit to the description. He told me you were a buck of the first head, but oddsflesh! Herbert looks the bigger buck of the two—ha! ha!"

And he burst into one of his uproarious fits of laughter.

"That was some time ago, sir—when I first came to town," interposed Herbert, as soon as he could. "Tradescant is very much changed since then."

"So it seems," replied Winter. "And so you are very much changed—but not in the same way—since you left Yorkshire."

"I hope you don't disapprove of my style of dress, sir?" said Herbert.

"Humph!—à la mode, no doubt—but I like Tradescant's better. Beg pardon, young gentleman, I'm taking great liberty with your name—but it's my way."

"No liberty at all, Mr Winter. I look upon you as a relation—as almost an uncle."

"Gad, sir, you do me great honour. I should be proud to call you nephew. Herbert didn't speak half so favourably of you as he ought."

"Sir, I beg—" cried the young man referred to.

"Not half so favourably as Prue," pursued Winter, disregarding the interruption; "and I find she was much nearer the truth."

"Did she give me a good character, sir?" cried Tradescant. "I set the greatest value upon Prue's good opinion."

"I'll tell you what she said," rejoined Winter. "She described you, as Herbert did, as a very fine gentleman, somewhat addicted to gaming, and rather too fond of pleasure; but she added—which Herbert didn't—that you were certain to reform. And I perceive by the sobriety of your dress and deportment that the girl was right."

"Sir," broke in Crutchet, unable to restrain himself, "I have the pleasure to inform you that Mr Tradescant Lorimer is entirely reformed. There isn't a steadier young gentleman than he is, or a better man of business, in Cheapside, or in the whole city of London. I wish I could say as much for your nephew and ward, Mr Herbert."

"Why, zounds! you dog,—what's this I hear?" cried Winter, turning to Herbert, with a comical expression of anger. "Aren't you steady? Don't you attend to business?—don't you stick to the shop, eh?"

"I have made the discovery, sir, that a mercantile life is not exactly my vocation," rejoined Herbert. "Nature never intended me for a draper."

"And what the deuce did nature intend you for?" demanded Winter, pretending to be still more enraged. "For a useless, worthless, idle, trifling puppy, eh? Is pleasure your vocation, sirrah? Why, you told me your worthy uncle had taken you into the concern, and meant to make you a partner if you conducted yourself properly."

"Very true, sir—so he did. I am still in the concern; but I own I don't like the business."

"Oh! you're too proud for it, eh? You've got some fine acquaintances, I make no doubt, who twit you about the shop—"

"That's it, sir—that's it," cried Crutchet. "No one could promise better than Mr Herbert; but he has rather disappointed us of late. Mr Tradescant and I were just remonstrating with him when you came in."

"Never fear! I'll work a change in him. I'll bring him to his senses," cried Winter, winking at Herbert.

"I'm glad to hear you speak so confidently, sir," observed Crutchet. "Nothing has been said to Sir Gresham. If Mr Herbert will but attend, all may yet be right."

"Oddsflesh! I'll make him," cried Winter, shaking his stick at Herbert. "This is the argument I shall employ. But whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"Tobias Crutchet, at your service, sir—for many years assistant to Sir Gresham."

"What, Old Bow Bells!" exclaimed Winter. "Glad to see you, sir. Shake hands."

"I think, sir, we've met before," said Crutchet, giving his hand respectfully to the old gentleman; "but it must have been a long time ago, since you've not been in London—as I heard you remark just now—for upwards of forty years, and I've never been out of it at all."

"If we ever have met before, Mr Crutchet, it must have been when we were a good deal younger than we now are, that's certain," rejoined Winter; "but I have heard of you from Prue. She told me of your nickname, and it tickled my fancy amazingly. Is it possible you've never been out of Lunnun, eh?"

"Never beyond the sound of Bow Bells, sir," rejoined Crutchet; "and never shall be—if I can help it—to my dying day. I'm a thorough Cockney, and persuade myself there can be nothing half so pleasant as this crowded city. But I grieve over some changes. For instance, I miss Stocks-market."

"Ay, so do I, Bow Bells. Excuse me, but I like the name. You remember the old statue over the conduit—Charles the Second—Sobieski?—ha! ha! ha! I've often laughed at it with Gresham—Zounds! what am I talking about?"

"Have you been to Bucklersbury, sir?" inquired Crutchet.

"Ay, to be sure—no—why do you ask?" cried Winter, getting very red in the face.

"I thought you would like to see the old house. It's still there, sir."

Crutchet watched the effect of this remark, and secretly enjoyed the old gentleman's confusion. Mr Winter, however, made no reply, but turning to Herbert, said, "I thought Prue was to be here. Isn't she coming?"

"I expect her every moment," rejoined the young man. "Ah! here she is!" he added, as the door was opened by Tiplady, and Prue and Milly entered the room.

IX.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT AND CRUTCHET ARE STILL MORE PUZZLED BY THE OLD GENTLEMAN.

UTTERING an exclamation of delight, Prue flew towards the old gentleman, who caught her in his arms, and kissed her affectionately.

"How fond she seems of her uncle, sir," remarked Crutchet in a low voice to Tradescant.

"Her uncle! hang me! if I know what to think of it," rejoined the young man.

"And so you are come at last, sir?" said Prue, in a tone of playful reproach, as she disengaged herself from the old gentleman's embrace. "You ought to have been here three months ago."

"I know I ought, lass," replied Winter. "But I've had so much to do at Sutton that I couldn't get away for the life of me. And latterly there has been this confounded election—that took up a month, besides costing a mint of money."

"You don't want excuses, I find, sir. However, I'm enchanted to hear of your return for the East Riding, and not sorry you did delay your journey to town. My time has passed most delightfully at the Mansion House—such splendid banquets—such grand balls—such receptions—such brilliant company—everybody you ever heard of, or could desire to see—and the Lord Mayor is so kind and so generous—and such a dear good uncle—and I love him so much—he thinks of everything, even to one's very dresses. This was his last present. 'Tis what we call an Italian Polonese. How do you like it, sir?"

"I can't tell," replied the old gentleman. "What you say about the Lord Mayor makes my eyes water. I long to see him, and thank him for all his goodness. How does he look, lass?—does he wear well, eh?"

"Wear well! Yes, sir. He looks as hearty as you do—I can't say more."

"Ay, but I'm his senior by seven years—"

"Hush! sir," exclaimed Prue, placing her fingers on her lips.

"Zooks! I was very near letting the cat out of the bag!" rejoined the old gentleman, with a laugh.

"Did you mark that, sir?" whispered Crutchet to Tradescant. "Your uncle Godfrey was just seven years older than your father."

"Now I can look at you, lass," cried Winter, examining Prue's attire. "An Italian Polonese, eh? By the maskins! but it's woundy fine. You'll astonish them when you go back to Sutton Hall."

"But I'm not going back to Sutton Hall—not at present, at all events," she replied. "The Lord Mayor doesn't want to part with me, and I can't tear myself from the Mansion House."

"I'm not surprised, considering its attractions," rejoined Winter; "but in my opinion it's something stronger even than the Mansion House attractions that makes you desire to stay. But who's the lovely girl you've got with you? Stay! don't tell me! let me guess—either I'm no judge, or 'tis Milly!"

"You are right, sir, it is Milly," replied the young lady in question. "And very glad I am to see you."

"I felt sure I couldn't be mistaken," said Winter, kissing her. "Excuse me, my dear. It's a way we old fellows have in Yorkshire."

"Oh! sir, you're quite welcome. I'm not at all offended," replied Milly, playfully presenting her cheek to him.

"Zounds! then I'll have another," he cried, kissing her again.

"Miss Milly's in the plot. I told you so, sir. She knows him," whispered Crutchet to Tradescant.

"You described Milly so exactly, Prue," pursued Winter, "that I knew her in a moment—but you said she was rather timid and shy. Now, I don't find her so at all."

"I ought not to be shy with you, sir," said Milly, smiling.

"No, i'faith," cried Winter. "I'm a sort of uncle, you know—your aunt's brother, that's it—ha! ha! I've explained the relationship to Tradescant," he added, with a wink.

"Oh! then he understands it?" said Prue, laughing.

"Perhaps better than you think," mentally ejaculated Tradescant.

"I suppose, my dear, there would be no use in asking you to come and see us in Yorkshire?" observed Winter to Milly. "You won't like such a dull life as ours, after all the gaieties of the Mansion House. And yet we might be able to offer you some amusement in the autumn. Yorkshire is a fine county, and Sutton Hall is a beautiful old place—though I say it that should not—embosomed in noble woods—with the Ouse flowing through the park—and we're only ten miles from York—so you can drive there as often as you please."

"What the deuce does he mean?" muttered Crutchet. "Godfrey Lorimer could never be member for the East Riding of Yorkshire, have an old hall, and a well-timbered park with the Ouse flowing through it. I'm perplexed again."

"Will you come and see us at Sutton, my dear?" said the old gentleman to Milly.

"With the greatest pleasure," she replied. "Your description of the place enchants me. Prue has often talked to me about the old house, and has made me long to behold it. I've never tried the country, but I'm sure I should like it better than town."

"Ay, that you will," cried Winter. "Oddsflesh! you don't know half the pleasures of a country life; but I'll give you a taste of them. I'll find you plenty of recreation. You shall hunt, course, practise archery, angle—manage the flower-garden, and the bees, and the poultry and doves, and have an easy-going nag to ride upon."

"Charming!" exclaimed Milly. "Everything you mention is to my taste. I quite long to be at Sutton."

"What! can you tear yourself away from the Mansion House?"

"Country life and country enchantments, such as you paint them, would please me infinitely more, sir."

"Then as soon as the session is over, if the Lord Mayor will spare you, you shall go down with me. Since Prue is so enamoured of the Mansion House, she may remain behind, but as Herbert doesn't like business, he shall go with us."

"You must excuse me, sir. I can't leave town."

"Heyday! what's this!" cried Winter. "Not leave town—but you shall, sir. What's the meaning of that smile? You've got some scheme afoot."

"Right, sir. I'm thinking of marrying."

"Marrying!" exclaimed Winter. "You'll ask my consent, I hope. And pray, sir, who are you thinking of marrying?"

"The daughter of a wealthy hosier in St Mary-axe, Alice Walworth by name. A very pretty girl, with a plum to her fortune."

"Pretty, certainly," observed Prue, "but a downright coquette, as Herbert knows from experience, since he has already been jilted by her."

"Ha! how was that?" inquired Winter.

"It's too long a story to tell now, sir," rejoined Prue, "but the sum of it is, that after encouraging Herbert, Alice Walworth engaged herself to Tradescant, who had a narrow escape of being made miserable for life; and now Herbert has been foolish enough to renew his suit, chiefly by the representations of a silly old alderman, Sir Felix Bland."

"I see! I see! the plum is the sole attraction, eh? The dog is a fortune-hunter."

"Let him deny it if he can," said Prue.

"I shan't attempt to deny it, sir," rejoined Herbert. "I don't profess any extraordinary affection for the girl. But my excellent friend Sir Felix Bland—a very shrewd, sensible man of the world, whatever Prue may allege to the contrary, and who knows Alice intimately—assures me she has many charming qualities, and is decidedly the greatest catch in the City."

"A fiddlestick's end for her charming qualities! She may be a great catch, but she shan't catch you. You shan't marry her, sir."

"Pray don't be so peremptory, sir. Suspend your judgment till you see her."

"Not a moment. I have other views for you."

Here Sir Felix Bland was announced by Tiplady.

"I'm glad Sir Felix is come," cried Herbert. "He'll soon make you alter your opinion, sir."

"No, he won't," replied the old gentleman, resolutely "You shan't have her, I tell you."

X.

IN WHICH TRADESCANT APPEALS TO MR WINTER.

The little alderman was in raptures at beholding the young ladies, and of course directed his first attentions to them, overwhelming them with high-flown compliments and adulation.

"Upon my word, Miss Prue," he said, "I have to charge you with great cruelty. You inflict wounds with those bright eyes that can't be cured—except by yourself. A score of my friends are dying for you, and they all declare you won't take compassion upon them. I can't tell how it is that so many of your admirers come to me. They will have it that I possess an influence with you, though I assure them to the contrary."

"There you are wrong, Sir Felix. You have great influence with me, and if I could be persuaded to listen to any of those gentlemen it would be by you."

"Then let me be the deputy of three deputies—to wit, Mr Deputy Hodge, Mr Deputy Wadling, and Mr Deputy Sidebottom. May I give one of them a hope?"

"No, Sir Felix—not the slightest."

"Ah! I see how it is—heart pre-occupied. I must find out the fortunate individual. Whoever he may be he is greatly to be envied."

"A very gallant old gentleman," observed Winter, who had been listening to the discourse.

"A stranger, I perceive," said Sir Felix, noticing Winter. "Who is he?"

"Mr Winter, my uncle and guardian," replied Prue. "Permit me to present him to you."

And she did the honours accordingly.

"Most happy to make your acquaintance, my dear Mr Winter," said Sir Felix, after the introduction had taken place. "From the country, I presume, sir?"

"From Yorkshire, sir," replied the old gentleman—"just arrived—come to Lunnun to take my seat in parliament, and look after these young folks—ha! ha!"

"Very right, my dear sir—very right. I am sure it must gratify a kindly nature like yours—for your nature is evidently kindly, Mr Winter—to find them looking so well. Your niece is greatly admired, and has made a hundred conquests, and as to your nephew, I might say more in his praise if he weren't present. Allow me to offer you a pinch of snuff, my dear Mr Winter. Your nephew is destined to cut a figure in the world. A fortune lies before him—a great fortune. He's likely to make an excellent match—to carry off one of the wealthiest of our City belles. D'ye take, my dear sir?"

"Yes, I take," replied the old gentleman, rather gruffly. "All this sounds very fine, Sir Felix. But there happens to be a material objection. I've got some one else in view for him."

"Pooh! my dear sir, this is straining your power as guardian rather too far. Your nephew will have a right to complain. You must allow him to decide for himself on a point where his happiness is concerned."

"Why, so he shall, but if he doesn't decide as I wish him, I'll dis—"

"Hold, sir," cried Herbert, checking him. "All I ask you is to see Alice Walworth and judge."

"Yes, see her and judge," said Sir Felix. "I know what your verdict will be. A testy old curmudgeon," he added, walking aside with Herbert. "But we'll get over his objections. But how comes it you never told me you had a guardian—and such a guardian as this old fellow—a member of parliament, eh?"

"I'll explain all at a more convenient opportunity," replied Herbert.

"And so you have made a great many conquests, eh, Prue?" said Winter, turning towards her.

"More than Sir Felix has mentioned, sir," observed Tradescant, joining them.

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the old gentleman, looking hard at him. "Whom has Sir Felix neglected to mention?"

"Perhaps Prue will tell you herself, sir."

"Nay, I'm sure I don't know," replied the young lady, laughing. "Several persons have tried to persuade me they are in love with me, but I didn't believe them."

"Oddsbobs, girl!" exclaimed Winter, "I believe you are growing a coquette."

"Not I, in truth, sir," she rejoined. "You mustn't blame me if I don't believe all I hear. I don't trifle with any one's affections."

"There I must flatly contradict you, Prue," said Tradescant. "You trifle sadly with mine. You won't give me an answer."

"How can I give you one, when I can't make up my mind?" she replied. "You would not be content with 'No,' and I'm not prepared to say 'Yes.'"

"Then I must appeal to your guardian to bring you to a decision," said Tradescant. "When he learns how devotedly attached I am to you, and how anxiously I have striven to approve my love, I am sure he will espouse my cause."

"Ay, that I will—heartily," replied Winter. "You speak out like a man. Prue's not the girl I take her for, if she doesn't decide in your favour."

"But you have always indulged me, sir, and let me have my own way—so I must have it now," she rejoined, playfully.

"This is ever the case, sir," cried Tradescant, with a look of disappointment. "Impossible to bring her to the point. Your authority may do it, sir—nothing else can."

"The girl has some object, I can see," thought Winter. "I mustn't interfere with her. My authority," he added aloud. "Oddsflesh! I've no control over her. She always does what she likes. But thus much I'll say, if she won't have you, she shall have no one else—with my consent, at all events."

"That's saying a great deal too much, sir," rejoined Prue, laughing. "You exercise undue coercion."

"Why not give the lad a direct answer?" demanded Winter.

"I'm not bound to offer reasons for anything I do," she replied. "I claim my sex's privilege of irresponsibility. If I am pressed now, my decision may be unfavourable. Leave me to myself, and my consent may possibly—mind, I only say possibly—be won. But a good deal depends—"

"Upon what?" cried Tradescant.

"Upon Herbert. If he marries Alice Walworth, I shan't marry at all."

"If that's the only difficulty, I'll answer for its removal," observed Winter.

At this moment the door again opened, and Mr Candish entered the room. He stopped on seeing it so full of company, and seemed half inclined to withdraw.

XI.

DISCLOSURES.

"GAD a mercy!" exclaimed Winter, staring at Candish as if thunderstruck, "who's that?"

"One of my father's household," replied Tradescant. "Do you want me, Mr Candish?"

"Yes, sir," replied the person addressed. "I have been to the counting-house, and was told you were in Mr Herbert's room, so I came here in search of you. I've a note for you from the Lord Mayor."

"Give it me," replied Tradescant.

Candish stepped towards him, but on perceiving Mr Winter he started, and stood as if transfixed. The note dropped from his grasp.

On his part, Winter looked equally surprised, and they remained gazing at each other for some moments in speechless astonishment.

At last, by a great effort, and as if shaking off some potent spell which had chained his faculties, Candish moved away, and, going up to Herbert, said, in a low voice, "You told me your father was dead. Who, then, is this?"

"The old gentleman, you mean. He is Mr Winter—my mother's brother."

"Are you quite sure of it?" demanded Candish.

"You ask me a question, and I give you an answer," rejoined the young man. "If you doubt me, address Mr Winter himself."

Meantime, Winter having in some measure recovered from his astonishment, interrogated Tradescant about Candish, but learnt nothing to satisfy his curiosity.

"I should like to have a word with him," he said.

"By all means," replied Tradescant. "Mr Candish," he called, "here is a gentleman, Mr Winter, who desires to speak to you."

"I am at Mr Winter's service," replied Candish, coming towards them. By this time he had quite regained his composure.

"Pray excuse my carelessness," he added, picking up the note and delivering it to Tradescant. "I don't know what came over me just now."

"We'll leave you together," said Tradescant, retiring with the rest.

"You call yourself Candish," said one old gentleman to the other, "but it won't do. I know who you are."

"And you call yourself Winter," rejoined the other old gentleman. "But I know *who* you are."

"What's the motive of this disguise?" demanded Winter.

"What's *your* motive?" rejoined the other.

"Mine is the gratification of my daughter's whim," said Winter.

"Mine is no whim—but I don't care to divulge my motive," said Candish.

"I thought you were dead," observed Winter.

"And I made sure you were," rejoined Candish.

"How has the world used you?" inquired Winter.

"Very badly until of late," replied Candish. "To judge from appearances, it has used you well enough."

"Ay, ay, I married well—a Yorkshire heiress—mistress of Sutton Park—and changed my name."

"And dropped all your old friends and relations. Not surprising—'tis the way of the world. I changed my name, too,—not because I was ashamed of my relations, but because they might reasonably enough have been ashamed of *me*."

"You do me an injustice, Lorry. Heaven knows I was never ashamed of my relations. But my wife—rest her soul!—was a very proud woman, and I never dared talk to her of my kinsfolk."

"Then you really are called Winter?"

"Don't I tell you I took my wife's name?—I'm Godfrey Winter, known in my own country as Squire Winter, of Sutton Park, and am just returned for the East Riding of Yorkshire."

"Indeed! You're much too great for me. Now mark me, Mr Winter. Henceforth, we must be strangers to each other—that is, you are not to treat me as if there were any relationship between us, and be assured I shan't forget myself towards you. To Sir Gresham—God bless him!—I have never admitted my identity, and probably never shall. With you I shall be equally reserved. I have weighty reasons," he added, gravely and almost sternly, "for maintaining my incognito."

"Don't be afraid, Lorry. I shan't betray you. Mercy on us! what a strange meeting this is! When I entered into my mad girl's scheme I didn't calculate on this as part of it."

"The scheme is now apparent to me," said Candish. "As chief actors in it, I must say your son and daughter have played their parts admirably. They have taken us all in. Believing them to be poor relations, Sir Gresham has treated them with the greatest kindness!"

"So I find," replied Winter. "His heart is made of the right stuff. Prue's object was to test Sir Gresham's goodness of heart, and nobly he has stood the trial."

"He is the kindest and best man in the world," rejoined Candish, warmly.

"And to think that I have kept aloof from him all this time!" cried Winter, in accents of self-reproach. "'Sdeath! I shall never forgive myself."

"Ay, ay, there's no excuse for *you*," rejoined Candish. "You ought to have made yourself known to him long ago. However, yours is the greatest loss."

"I feel it—I feel it," said Winter, with a half groan. "I have been much to blame. First of all, I was wrong to yield to my wife, and then I became stupidly insensible myself. I might never have made myself known at all but for Prue. However, the past cannot be remedied. We must be wiser in future. Won't you shake hands with me, Lorry?"

"Not before this company. It would awaken suspicion. And pray don't call me Lorry. With you, as with every one else, I must be merely Hugh Candish."

"Well, as you please," replied Winter, with a sigh.

"My father asks me in this note to come to the Mansion House," said Tradescant, approaching Winter. "Would you like to be presented to him? If so, come with me."

"With the greatest delight," replied the old squire. "Herbert was to have presented me to his lordship, but I would rather have your introduction, for many reasons."

"The arrangement will suit me extremely well, sir, since I have a call to make with Sir Felix Bland," said Herbert to the squire. "I'll follow you to the Mansion House anon."

"I guess where you're going, sir," cried Winter. "But it will come to nothing. You'll never have my consent. Mind that."

With this he offered his arm to Milly, while Prue naturally fell to the care of Tradescant, and they all four went down-stairs, followed by Candish and Crutchet.

Sedan-chairs were in waiting in the hall, and the ladies entering them, the whole party, with the exception of Crutchet, who returned to business, proceeded towards the Mansion House.

XII.

THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS.

HALF a dozen gorgeously-arrayed footmen were standing at the grand portal as the chairs containing the young ladies were borne up the lofty steps, and deposited at the entrance of the saloon. A bulky hall porter advanced towards the party.

"Where's the Lord Mayor, Mr Jollands ?" said Tradescant to this personage. "In the justice-room ?"

"No, sir," replied Jollands. "You'll find his lordship in the swordbearer's room. He went there about five minutes ago. Ah! there he is," he added, as Sir Gresham came forth from the room in question, accompanied by the sheriffs, three or four aldermen, and as many common-councilmen.

In a minute or two the assembly broke up, and the sheriffs and the others, bowing to the Lord Mayor, departed. Leaving Mr Winter where he was for the moment, Tradescant then went up to his father, who was moving towards a room on the left of the vestibule, and told him he desired to present a gentleman to him.

The Lord Mayor at once assented, but desired his son to bring the gentleman to him, and proceeded to the chamber whither he was bound. Tradescant and Winter followed, still accompanied by Prue and Milly, both of whom were anxious to witness the meeting.

Just as they reached the door of the room into which the Lord Mayor had passed, Winter stopped, and said in a low voice to Prue, "I don't think I can go in. My courage completely fails me. I shall never be able to sustain my part."

"Oh! you mustn't give way thus," she rejoined, in an encouraging tone; "I'll help you."

"Well, well, I must go through with it, I suppose," said the old gentleman.

"Go on, sir—go on," said Candish, pushing him into the room, and closing the door after him.

The apartment in which Mr Winter found himself was large and lofty, but heavily furnished, and had a somewhat sombre air. The old squire did not dare to raise his eyes towards Sir Gresham, who was standing in the centre of the room, but kept back, shading his face with his cocked-hat.

"Who is this you have got with you?" inquired the Lord Mayor of Tradescant.

"Mr Winter—a Yorkshire gentleman, sir," replied his son.

"Well, I shall be very happy to make his acquaintance. But why doesn't he come forward?"

"Pray excuse him," said Prue, in an under-tone; "he is very much in awe of your Lordship."

"In awe of me! nonsense!" rejoined Sir Gresham, laughing. "Bring him forward, Tradescant. Say I shall be delighted to receive him."

"Pray come on, Mr Winter," said Tradescant. "His lordship will be very glad to know you."

"Now go on. Don't you hear what they say?" cried Candish, pushing him forward.

Thus forced to advance, Winter lowered his hat, and for the first time his features became fully revealed to the Lord Mayor.

Sir Gresham looked at him as if doubting the evidence of his senses, and at last directing an inquiring glance at Prue, who tried to avoid his gaze, said, "Did you not tell me your father was dead?"

What answer she might have returned it is impossible to say, for Winter did not give her time to make any, but roared out, "I can't keep up the deception any longer. No, Sir Gresham, I'm not dead. I'm alive, and hearty as yourself."

"Gracious powers!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Can this be my brother Godfrey?"

"Ay, ay, it's Godfrey himself, and heartily glad he is to see you again, brother."

"I am very glad to see you, Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor, who was very much agitated, and spoke rather faintly. "I never expected we should meet again on earth. Excuse me. The surprise is somewhat too much. You ought to have prepared me," he said, in a half-reproachful tone, to Tradescant.

"I could not do so, sir," replied his son; "for though I half suspected who it was, I was not quite sure."

"It was my fault, dearest uncle, and I now see the mistake," said Prue, in a voice of much concern. "I hope you are not ill?"

"A momentary faintness," he replied, sinking into a chair. "It will soon pass." And he covered his face with his hands. The others gathered anxiously round him, and Winter looked reproachfully at Prue.

"If anything happens, I shall never forgive myself," he said in a low tone to her.

"Let assistance be called," said Milly, alarmed.

"Leave him alone," said Candish. "He will be better soon. You have carried this matter too far."

"I see it—I see it," replied Prue. "How do you feel, dearest uncle? Speak—say you forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," replied Sir Gresham, raising his head, and showing that his eyes were filled with moisture. "It is joy that overpowers me. Believing, as I did, that the grave had closed upon your father—that we should meet no more on earth—what must my emotions be to see him standing before me?"

"I quite conceive them, dearest uncle, but don't excite yourself—don't dwell upon them."

"No; let us be thankful we are both spared for this meeting," cried Winter, "though I didn't mean it to be so serious as it has turned out; but I ought to have considered that where the heart is warm—as yours is—the feelings are not to be trifled with. Give me your hand, Gresham!—give me your hand! And so you knew me, eh?"

"Knew you! to be sure I did!" exclaimed Sir Gresham, shaking hands with him affectionately, and gazing at him through his misty eyes. "But do you know how long it is since we've met?—Forty-two years, sir—forty-two years! What have you been about not to let me hear from you during all that time? If I wasn't so glad to see you I should be very angry."

"My conduct is unpardonable, brother," rejoined Winter; "and yet I know you'll forgive it. Such excuse as I have to offer—and it is a very poor one I will frankly admit—will best be made by telling you what has happened to me. I won't make a long story of it. When I left Lunnun in 1719, while you were still a 'prentice to old Tradescant, and working your way steadily on, I went down into Yorkshire, and started a small business in Scarborough, but I made little out of it—scarcely enough to support myself—and I don't know what might have become of me if I hadn't been lucky enough to marry an heiress, Arabella, daughter of Mr Wymond Winter, of Sutton Park. Her brother, Ambrose, broke his neck when out hunting, and it was after that event that the lady married me. My wife was a very proud woman, though the marriage she had made would seem to be but little in accordance with such notions, and she not only required me to take her name—to which I had no objection—but insisted upon my completely sundering all connection with my own family, to which I *ought* to have objected. Several children were the fruit of the union, but I lost them all except the two youngest, Herbert and Prue. During my wife's lifetime you will see, brother, that there was some reason for my not keeping up any intercourse with you; but I have now been a widower for more than a year, and ought to have taken immediate steps to repair the wrong I had committed. But I know not what withheld me—false shame, perhaps. During their mother's lifetime, neither of my children had been aware of their relationship to you, and it was with infinite surprise they learned that the distinguished citizen, Sir Gresham Lorimer, was their uncle. When the news of your election as Lord Mayor came down to us, nothing would content them but that they should go up to town and pay you a visit. To this I at first objected—don't ask me why?—but at last Prue proposed that she and her brother should visit you in the guise of poor relations, and the notion chimed so well with my own humour that I agreed to it. The plot was then concocted by Prue, which has since been carried out. Perhaps I ought never to have permitted such a scheme to be practised, and yet I cannot regret doing so, as I should otherwise have not been fully aware of your noble qualities."

"Say no more, brother—I am quite satisfied," cried the Lord Mayor, who had listened with deep interest to the recital. "I won't ask you whether you have ever thought of me during this long interval; but I have often thought of you. The fact is, we have been both to blame. If I had made proper inquiries I should have found you out, but I was engaged in business, and time passed on."

"Ay, I understand," replied Winter. "It's all right now. By the maskins! it's a strange thing for brothers to part almost when boys, and not to meet again till they are grown old fellows."

"Strange indeed!" said the Lord Mayor. "And so you are the contriver of this plot, eh, hussy?" he added, turning to Prue.

"Yes, uncle, I am," she replied. "And I hope I shan't incur your displeasure by what I have done."

"But suppose I hadn't received you, what would you have done then? Gone back, eh?"

"I can't say, uncle," she replied. "But I had no doubts whatever about it, and you behaved just as I expected—most nobly. I may now tell you that Herbert was so offended by the treatment he experienced from my aunt and from my cousins, Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris, that I had great difficulty in preventing him from throwing up his part."

"Don't omit me, Prue," remarked Tradescant. "I behaved as badly as any of them. My rudeness to Herbert was inexcusable."

"You have made ample amends since," replied Prue. "However, uncle, the complete success of my plot is attributable to darling little Milly here, whom I at once made my confidante. Without her aid I could not have gone on. She helped me to keep up the deception."

"I see it all, you little rogues," said Sir Gresham; "you have imposed upon me finely."

"Ah! brother, you don't know what Prue can do," cried Winter, with one of his boisterous laughs. "The cunning jade can twist me round her little finger—ha! ha!"

"I don't doubt it," replied the Lord Mayor, with a good-humoured smile. "If I had not been very stupid, niece, I must have suspected something from your sudden change of manner when you came to the Mansion House. It certainly perplexed me."

"So it did me, sir," observed Tradescant. "I could in no way account for it."

"Well, I suppose you can both understand it now," she rejoined.

"Yes, yes; I have got the key to the enigma now," said Tradescant. "And I also understand some things in Herbert's conduct which before appeared inexplicable."

"Oddsflesh! I can't help laughing when I think of Herbert attending to business—ha! ha!" roared Winter. "That's the best part of the joke—ha! ha!"

"He did very well for a week or two," observed Prue; "but after that time I had great difficulty with him. You ought to have been here long ago, papa."

"So I ought," replied Winter. "And this reminds me, brother, that you have been at a very considerable expense for these young folk, which you must permit me to repay you."

"Nothing of the sort, Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor. "It has been a great happiness to me to do what I have done."

"Ay, that would be all very well if they were really poor relations; but as that is not exactly the case, I must insist upon reimbursing you."

"Not another word on the subject, Godfrey, if you would not offend me," said the Lord Mayor. "Nay, nay," he continued, seeing that Winter was not altogether satisfied, "if your son and daughter will play the part of poor relatives, they must take the consequences."

"Oddsbobs! that's true," cried Winter. "I never thought of that. Well, if I must be under an obligation, I would rather be so to you than to any one else."

"I shall never be able to discharge half the obligations I owe to my uncle," said Prue.

"Yes you will—he'll show you how to do it," rejoined the Lord Mayor. "I tell you what, Godfrey, you'll have to go back empty-handed. You must leave Prue behind. I shan't be able to part with her."

"If I do, I must take Milly in exchange, brother," rejoined Winter.

"We must hear what Milly says to that," observed Sir Gresham.

"Oh! I'm quite ready to go with my uncle," she answered.

"Egad! I suspect this plot has a good many ramifications," observed the Lord Mayor. "Fresh lights burst upon me each moment."

"Since you have announced your intention of detaining Prue, sir," said Tradescant, "I hope you mean to provide her with a husband."

"Most certainly I do," replied the Lord Mayor. "She has already had several offers—some which appeared advantageous enough to me, though they might not appear equally so to you. I now understand why you refused young Cracraft, niece. You looked higher."

"No, uncle, that was not exactly the reason," she replied, demurely.

"I know why she refused him," rejoined Winter, with a great laugh. "Don't you perceive the real state of the case, brother? She likes some one else a vast deal better."

"Oh! if I dared to think that I was the favoured person!" exclaimed Tradescant. "You cannot be unaware, sir," he added to his father, "that my affections have long since been fixed upon Prue. It is impossible to be so much with her, as I have been, and not to love her. Sometimes I have persuaded myself that my passion was returned—but again the indifference she displays towards me has raised fearful doubts in my mind. I trust she will trifle with me no longer. If my hopes must be crushed, better they should be so at once than I should be kept in such a state of suspense. Her father is now with us. In his presence, and in your presence, I ask her hand. My future happiness entirely depends upon the answer I may receive."

"There, girl, what do you say to that?" cried Winter.

"That's to the purpose, I fancy. You know my wishes. I don't care to make them commands."

"No, no coercion. Prue must decide for herself," said the Lord Mayor. "Though I could wish for no better wife for my son, and though I truly believe he would now make her an excellent husband, yet unless there is mutual love they had better not come together."

"You are good enough, uncle, to say you would not have me coerced," observed Prue. "Papa hints at laying his commands upon me, but I can assure you he lets me do just what I please. To be sure, I don't often disobey him, but in a matter of this kind, which concerns me more than any one else, I must really have my own way. Doubt of Tradescant's sincerity would be impossible after what he has just said. I may appear to trifle with him and to torment him needlessly, but I cannot help it. I have made up my mind that I won't consent unless—" And she paused.

"Unless what, niece?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"I must confide it to you in a whisper, uncle," she said, placing her lips to Sir Gresham's ear, and saying something in a low tone that made him laugh heartily.

"Well, let it be so," he said. "The arrangement pleases me. But where is Herbert?"

"He is gone with Sir Felix Bland to call on Alice Walworth," replied Prue. "He has renewed his intimacy with that coquette. He talks of her in much the same strain that Tradescant once did."

"Oh! that will never do!" said the Lord Mayor. "Alice Walworth won't suit your son, brother."

"He shan't have her!" cried Winter. "I've told him so already. Zounds! if I can't coerce Prue, I *will* coerce him."

"Mr Walworth is a very decent old fellow, but Alice would never do for a country gentleman's wife," observed the Lord Mayor. "I now see why Sir Felix Bland wished the Walworths to be invited to the Easter ball."

"But have you invited them, papa?" inquired Milly, with some anxiety.

"Of course," replied Sir Gresham. "So solicited, I couldn't do otherwise. But never mind. There is no great likelihood that the match will come off."

"None whatever," added Winter, emphatically.

At this moment Sir Felix Bland and Herbert entered the room.

"Why, you are back earlier than I expected," cried Winter. "You must have paid but a short visit."

"The ladies were out," replied Herbert, carelessly.

"They have gone to the Tower with young Cracraft," said Sir Felix, "and left word for us to follow them, but Herbert didn't seem inclined to do so."

"Are you talking of Alice Walworth and her mother?" inquired the Lord Mayor.

"Yes, my lord; your nephew is in high favour there," replied Sir Felix.

"One jilting doesn't seem enough for him," remarked the Lord Mayor. "He must take care young Cracraft doesn't supersede him. That young fellow is very handsome, and a great favourite with the sex, though Prue doesn't appreciate his merits."

"Hang young Cracraft!" exclaimed Herbert. "I'll cut his throat."

"Nay, you ought to be obliged to him," said Prue. "If he opens your eyes to your folly in regard to Alice, he will do you infinite service. However, I am sorry for you. It is mortifying to be so coolly turned off."

"Don't tease him any more, Prue," said Milly. "He looks vexed."

"Yes, I am vexed," replied the young man. "Well, sir," he added to his father, "I suppose full explanations have taken place between you and Sir Gresham?"

"Ay, ay, your uncle knows all," replied Winter.

"Concluding it would be so," rejoined Herbert, "I have let Sir Felix into the secret."

"And very much surprised I have been by the information, my dear Mr Winter," observed Sir Felix. "Permit me to say, sir, that had I been aware Herbert was the son of a wealthy country gentleman, I should not have encouraged him to pay court to Alice Walworth; but looking upon him as a young man who had to make his way in the world, I thought a girl with such a fortune a most desirable match."

"Under the supposed circumstances, you were quite right, Sir Felix," replied Winter; "but I should be glad if you could undo what you have done."

"Undo it!—well, I'll try," replied the little alderman.

"Harkye, Godfrey," said the Lord Mayor, taking Winter apart, "when we were last together there were three of us. You haven't inquired after the third."

"I didn't need to do so. I have seen him. Nay, I see him now," glancing over his shoulder at Candish. "I knew him at once. But why does he deny his name? I hope there's nothing wrong."

"I do not think there is," replied the Lord Mayor. "But there is some mystery which I cannot unravel."

At this moment the door was opened by an usher, who announced Mr Alderman Beckford.

XIII.

IN WHICH AN IMPORTANT VISITOR IS ANNOUNCED.

"Good day, my lord," cried Beckford, as he entered. "I have news for you. Ah! Mr Winter!" he exclaimed, catching sight of that personage. "I didn't expect to see you here. When did you arrive in town?"

"Only last evening, sir, or I should have paid my respects to you," replied the other.

"What, are you acquainted with Mr Winter?" said the Lord Mayor to Beckford.

"To be sure," replied the alderman. "He and I are old friends."

"You amaze me!" exclaimed Sir Gresham. "Why, I never heard you allude to him."

"Very likely not. I was not aware you knew him. Well, sir," he added to Winter, "I have to offer you my congratulations on your triumphant election. You came in, in spite of ministerial opposition. I did you some service. I got Mr Pitt and Lord Temple to write to some influential friends, and they helped you."

"They brought me in," replied Winter.

"Why, surely you're not the Mr Winter who has just been elected for the East Riding of Yorkshire, eh?" cried Sir Gresham.

"Of course he is," replied Beckford; "why, who else did you take him for? Mr Winter is a great gain to us—as staunch a supporter of the Great Commoner as your lordship, and as strongly opposed to the Favourite."

"Ay, that I am," said Winter.

"Who would have thought it?" exclaimed the Lord Mayor. "Why, you never said a word to me about your election?"

"We have had so many family matters to discuss that I haven't had time," replied Winter.

"Family matters!" exclaimed Beckford, surprised in his turn. "Are you connected with Sir Gresham, Mr Winter?"

"Pretty closely, sir," replied the old gentleman. "He is my brother—that's all."

"Poh! poh! you are jesting! Your brother. How can that be?"

"Easily enough," replied Winter. "I married the heiress of Sutton Park, and took her name. I am Sir Gresham's elder brother, Godfrey."

"Surprising indeed! But I remember a circumstance that occurred on the Lord Mayor's Day—a circumstance that produced a very strong impression on me—when two young persons, describing themselves as children of a deceased brother, presented themselves to Sir Gresham, and were most kindly received by him. Pray who are they?"

"My son and daughter, sir. There they are to speak for themselves. I'm the deceased brother—ha! ha! The whole thing was a hoax, sir—an experiment upon Sir Gresham's goodness of heart. You saw how he acted, you say?"

"I did, and shall never forget it. No man could have behaved better than Sir Gresham did on that occasion."

"But your news, my good sir—your news?" demanded the Lord Mayor. "You said you had something to communicate."

"So I have—something highly important," replied Beckford. "But the surprise of seeing Mr Winter put it out of my head. I came to prepare you for a visit from a person of the greatest consequence—"

"There are so many persons of great consequence in town just now that I shall never be able to guess whom you mean," said the Lord Mayor. "Is it the Great Commoner?"

"No; some one even greater than he. His Majesty is coming to the Mansion House this morning. The visit will be strictly private. A plain coach, and no escort, as is the way when the King has any little matter of his own to transact. My information is obtained from a reliable source. His Majesty is certainly coming, and Lord Melcomb will attend him. I thought it best to apprize you of the visit, though the King designs to take you by surprise."

At this moment the door was suddenly opened by the usher, whose excited looks showed he had something more than ordinary to communicate.

"My lord! my lord!" exclaimed the bewildered official, "his Majesty has just arrived at the Mansion House. I'm sure it's the King, because he has got his hat on, and everybody is bowing to him. His Majesty is crossing the vestibule, attended by some gentlemen of your lordship's household. What shall I do, my lord?"

"Stay where you are, Fremantle," replied Sir Gresham, with a calmness that confounded the usher.

In another moment a gentleman of the household appeared at the door, and in a low but distinct voice announced "The King." As he retired, his Majesty stepped quickly and unceremoniously into the room.

XIV.

THE KING'S PRIVATE VISIT TO THE MANSION HOUSE.

THE King was plainly attired in a blue cloth coat, and was only distinguished by the star upon his breast. He wore top-boots, a tie-wig, and a cocked-hat, which of course he did not remove, and carried a cane in his hand. He stood erect, with a glowing cheek and a healthful look.

His Majesty was attended by Lord Melcomb, who seemed, if possible, to have increased in bulk, wore a richly-embroidered cherry-coloured silk coat, striped silk breeches, spotted silk hose, deep ruffles, a diamond solitaire, and an immense periwig, loaded with powder.

"Where's the Lord Mayor?" cried the King, in a quick voice. "Ah! I see!—I see!" he added as Sir Gresham advanced towards him, and made a profound obeisance. "No one need leave the room," continued the King, as all those assembled within drew back, awaiting an intimation from his Majesty to withdraw, it being contrary to etiquette to retire without permission. "Quite an unceremonious visit, my lord," he went on. "I wouldn't even give you notice of it. I hope I don't interrupt you in any way."

"Interrupt me, sir!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor; "that would be impossible. I am ever ready to attend on your Majesty, but it so chances that you have arrived at a moment when I am quite unoccupied. Most of the persons present are relatives, and we were merely talking of family matters."

"Odd!—something connected with your family has brought me here," observed the King. "So, since you tell me most of the company are your kinsfolk, there can be no objection to their remaining. But where's the Lady Mayoress? I don't see her among them."

"She is within, sir, and shall be instantly summoned, if you desire it."

"No! no! no need to do that," cried the King, somewhat hastily. "I hope she's well—I hope she's well—a fine woman!—a very fine woman—but wears too lofty a head-dress. I shall never forget how it stuck fast in her chariot window—ha! ha!—very droll!—very ridiculous—ha! ha!"

While he was laughing heartily and the company were participating in the royal merriment, the door opened, and the Lady Mayoress, followed by her two elder daughters, entered the room as majestically as she could, for the door not being wide enough for her ample hoop, she had to raise her dress on one side to effect a passage. Her ladyship wore a sacque of dark lilac satin, trimmed with chenille silver, made very low behind, and falling off the shoulders. Her head-dress, though not so monstrous as on the occasion that had provoked the King's merriment, was still lofty enough, the back hair being enclosed in a puff-bag, with slab curls above it, intermixed with white tiffany and beads.

Both her daughters were richly and elegantly attired—Lady Dawes in a pearl-green sacque, trimmed with flowers and deeply flounced, and a Ranelagh tippet of fine blond; while Mrs Chatteris wore a sky-blue riding-dress, braided with silver, and a fantail hat. As soon as she had cleared the door, the Lady Mayoress advanced towards his Majesty, and, when within the prescribed distance, curtseyed to the ground, while her daughters imitated her example.

"Glad to see you, madam," said the good-natured monarch, acknowledging their obeisances by touching his hat in military fashion, "and you, too, ladies. I was just inquiring about you."

"Your Majesty does me infinite honour," exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, enchanted.

"No more accidents, I hope, with your head-dress, madam?" said the King.

"None whatever, sir," she replied. "I followed your Majesty's judicious advice, and lowered it considerably. It makes me proud that you should deign to remember the circumstance."

"I'm not likely to forget it," replied the King, laughing. "And now, my Lord Mayor," he added to Sir Gresham, "I'll tell you what has brought me to the Mansion House. I have already intimated that it is on a matter connected with your family. On the occasion of your grand banquet at Guildhall, I interrogated a man whom you supposed to be a long-lost brother, but who could not be induced to admit the relationship."

"I tremble at this commencement," muttered the Lady Mayoress, becoming agitated, and having recourse to her fan.

"The incident was a singular one," continued the King, "and my curiosity was excited about that man. You promised to ascertain the truth concerning him, and to acquaint me with the result of your investigations, but you have never yet done so."

"If I have appeared remiss, it is because I have had no information to lay before your Majesty," replied Sir Gresham.

"Have you taken any trouble at all in the matter, my lord?" demanded the King.

"Not much, I confess, sir," replied Sir Gresham, "being perfectly satisfied that my suspicions were correct. I am sure the person is my brother."

"Oh no! your Majesty, it is not so," exclaimed the Lady Mayoress. "The wretch is a vile impostor."

"How can he be an impostor, madam, in the sense you mean," said the King, sharply, "since, as I understand, he still disclaims all relationship to Sir Gresham?"

"It is all his cunning, your Majesty. He works upon Sir Gresham's good feelings. He is no more Sir Gresham's brother than he is Pope of Rome. Both Sir Gresham's brothers died many, many years ago."

"How do you know that, madam?" demanded the King, quickly.

"I haven't proof positive, your Majesty," she replied, "but Sir Gresham has often told me so himself. He was quite sure they must be dead, he said, or he should have heard from them."

"That was his impression at the time, no doubt," rejoined the King. "But he appears to have altered his opinion since."

"Entirely altered it, sir," replied the Lord Mayor. "I am now satisfied that both my brothers are living."

"Eh, eh, what, both?" cried the King.

"Both, your Majesty," rejoined Sir Gresham.

"Very odd!—very odd, indeed!" cried the King. "Both supposed dead!—both come to life again, eh? But about the one who was brought before me—you are confident, you say, that he is your brother?"

"Quite confident, sir."

"Then what can be the man's motive for persisting in a denial of the relationship?"

"I am unable to conjecture, sir."

"Have you never pressed him for an explanation?"

"Not of late, sir. I have forborne to do so, because my inquiries seemed to pain him."

"Perhaps with reason. What has become of him? Where is he now?"

"Unless I am very much mistaken, sir, the man is in the room at this moment," observed Lord Melcomb.

"He is, my lord," replied Sir Gresham.

"Let him stand forward," cried the King, seating himself in a large arm-chair.

Thus enjoined, Candish stepped into the presence, and made a low obeisance. He looked exceedingly pale, but his bearing, though profoundly respectful, was firm.

"Ay, ay, this is the man," cried the King, eyeing him sharply. "I recollect him, though he's greatly improved in appearance."

"Owing to Sir Gresham's kindness, your Majesty," said Candish. "Thanks to him, I have entirely recovered from my abject condition. He has made a new man of me."

"What has he done for you, eh?" demanded the King.

"Appointed me to an office of trust and responsibility in his household, your Majesty," replied Candish.

"And he has been satisfied with your conduct, eh?"

"Perfectly satisfied, sir," interposed the Lord Mayor. "He has had entire control of the expenditure, and has managed matters admirably."

"And you have never had any doubts of his honesty, my lord?" pursued the King.

"Of his honesty?" exclaimed Sir Gresham, surprised and hurt. "None whatever, sir. I would trust him with untold gold. I would stake my life upon his honesty."

"You might place yourself in jeopardy, sir," said the King. "I must now tell you that this man, whom you have so blindly trusted, and for whom you would be responsible with your life, is a convicted felon."

"A felon!" exclaimed the Lord Mayor, starting, while a shudder pervaded the assemblage.

All eyes were directed towards Candish, who appeared as if struck by a mortal blow, and caught at a chair for support.

"Look at him!—his agitation proclaims his guilt," said the King.

"I cannot—will not believe him guilty, sir," said the Lord Mayor, in a voice of anguish. "Speak, brother, and defend yourself."

Candish raised his head for a moment, and then let it fall again, as if stunned.

"With your Majesty's permission," remarked Lord Melcomb, "I will lay before the Lord Mayor the result of inquiries which by your commands have been made into this wretched man's history; and I may observe in the commencement—without seeking to impute blame to his lordship—that it would have been better if he had satisfied himself of the man's character before making him controller of his household."

Here Candish again raised his livid countenance, and looked almost vacantly at the speaker. Dews as of death had gathered thickly on his brow.

"Proceed, my lord," said the Lord Mayor.

"I am sorry to have to tell your lordship," pursued Lord Melcomb, with ill-disguised malice, "that there is no doubt whatever that this wretched man is your brother—"

"Oh no, no, no!" cried Candish. "I am not his brother."

"Peace!" said Sir Gresham, authoritatively. "You will convince no one by this denial."

"No one," said Melcomb. "It is, unhappily, too true. The fact has been elicited. Had there been any doubt, I would gladly have spared your lordship the pain of a public disclosure—"

"Spare me nothing, my lord," said Sir Gresham, "but go on."

"I will not task your lordship's patience too strongly," pursued Lord Melcomb, who seemed to enjoy Sir Gresham's trouble, "but in order to explain matters fully, it will be necessary to go back to the year 1720, when the person now before us left London and proceeded to Chester, where he entered the employment of an Irish linen-draper named Newton, by whom he was much trusted, and by whom, if he had not wronged him, he would have been made a partner—"

"As Heaven shall judge me I never wronged him!" exclaimed Candish earnestly. "I never wronged any man."

"Unluckily," continued Lord Melcomb, without noticing the interruption, "the clerk in whom Mr Newton placed confidence was not proof against the temptation of the large sums of money passing through his hands. Several remittances by country dealers were abstracted, but Mr Newton's suspicions never attached to his confidential clerk, whom he could not believe capable of dishonesty, but were rather directed towards another clerk, named James Archer. At last, however, the guilt was fixed upon the right party. In this way. A bank bill for a considerable sum—£500, I think—was sent by letter to Mr Newton.

This bill was missing. All the clerks were examined, and the strictest investigations made; but at last—at the suggestion of Archer, who still unjustly laboured under his master's suspicions—the confidential clerk's desk was searched, and the bill was found secreted within it. Against such damnatory evidence as this no defence could be offered, yet the culprit vehemently protested his innocence. However, he was tried, found guilty, and narrowly escaped hanging, but owing to the intercession of his worthy master, and his previous good character, sentence of death was commuted into imprisonment for life. That confidential clerk—the villain who robbed his master, and whose real name I will not pronounce—now stands before us."

"Yes, I am that unfortunate man," cried Candish, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands; "but, as I hope for mercy hereafter, I am innocent of this terrible charge. I was always faithful to Mr Newton. I never wronged him of a farthing."

"Ay, so you said in the dock at Chester, but few believed the assertion," rejoined Lord Melcomb. "My story, however, is not done. The criminal clerk—I again spare his name—was imprisoned in Chester Castle, where he was kept in durance vile for more than two years, at the end of which time—though the gaol is tolerably strong—he contrived to break out, and effect his escape. We have had some difficulty in tracing the fugitive's subsequent career, but have ascertained that he went first to Liverpool, and thence to Dublin, and eventually passed over to France. Probably the account he gave of himself on his previous examination by his Majesty was correct, and we may believe that he really did remain for a lengthened period on the Continent, since it is only within the last three years that a person answering to his description, and calling himself Candish, appeared at Bristol. There he seems to have led an idle, vagabond life, and to have associated with strolling players, showmen, and other disreputable characters. At one time he was drawer at a tavern, at another croupier at a gaming-house, and after that a quack doctor and a merry-andrew at country fairs."

"I could do no better—I could get no other employment," cried Candish. "I was a broken-down, dispirited man."

"What have you to say to this accusation?" demanded the King, in a severe tone.

"Simply to repeat my innocence of the charge brought against me, sir," said Candish. "I know I shall not obtain credence—but I speak the truth. Were I put to the rack I should still declare my innocence—and, indeed, no torments could be greater than those I now endure. I have been falsely accused—punished for a crime I never committed—have endured obloquy and unmerited suffering—have been branded as a felon, compelled to fly from my own country, and return to it covertly—but I have never suffered half so much as I now suffer in bringing shame and dishonour upon my noble-hearted brother, and in giving his enemies an opportunity of triumphing over him."

"If my advice had been taken, this dreadful exposure would never have occurred," said the Lady Mayoress.

"A dreadful exposure indeed," said Lady Dawes. "I shall never survive it."

"That a high and honourable name, such as my brother bears, should be sullied by any supposed act of mine, would be intolerable, but I cannot believe that such will be the case," pursued Candish. "His conduct towards me is such as can only redound to his credit in the opinion of all worthy men. I was brought before him, as your Majesty knows, in the most abject state of distress, yet he did not—even in his day of pride—even in your august presence, sir, he did not hesitate to own me."

"Quite true!" cried the King, somewhat moved. "Quite true! The Lord Mayor behaved nobly. I have always said so."

"But for my good brother's kindness—but for his timely assistance," pursued Candish, "that day would have been my last on earth. Driven to despair, I should have buried my sufferings in the river that flows through your city, sir. But he took me by the hand. He gave me back some of the self-respect I had lost. I thought the worst was over—that the few years remaining of my troubled life would be passed in peace. But it was not so ordained. Misery, as usual, was dogging at my heels. When the sky appeared cloudless comes this terrible clap of thunder, and I am stricken down again—never more to rise."

The old man's passionate eloquence powerfully affected all his auditors. Many of them, as may well be conceived, were painfully moved, and but for the presence of the King some stronger manifestation of their sympathies would have been made. Lord Melcomb took out his magnificent diamond snuff-box, and applied himself to it. The King remained thoughtful for a moment, and then remarked to Lord Melcomb, "I can't believe this man is guilty."

"I'm sorry to say there can be no doubt about it, sir," replied the stout nobleman, shaking his head.

At this juncture Mr Beckford stepped forward, and making a profound obeisance to the King, said, "I have allowed the matter to proceed thus far, sir, because I wished to hear what my Lord Melcomb had to bring forward, and because I thought it would be most to the interest of the unfortunate man that he should be allowed to speak for himself before anything was said for him. No one who has listened to him—I will not even except your Majesty—could, I think, doubt his innocence. But I am happy to say I am in a condition to prove it."

"Eh! eh! what!—to prove his innocence!" cried the King, quickly. "I'm glad of it. But how, sir,—how?"

"By this letter, sir, which I received this very morning from Chester. It is from old Mr Newton. He encloses a duly certified confession of James Archer, his former clerk, who has recently expiated a long catalogue of crimes on the gallows. Archer confesses that he abstracted the bank-bill, and, in order to avoid certain detection, hid it in Lawrence Lorimer's desk. For this vile act, and for its deplorable consequences to his victim, the wretch seems to have felt due compunction. Old Mr Newton, also, as your Majesty will see, if you will deign to cast your eye over his letter, expresses the greatest grief for poor Lawrence Lorimer's unmerited sufferings. Such was the opinion he entertained of him, he says, that he never could believe him guilty, and would not have prosecuted if he had not been compelled to do so."

"You have come forward most opportunely, and I am glad of it, Mr Beckford," said the King. "But how happens it that Mr Newton addressed that letter to you?"

"Shrewdly observed, your Majesty," said Lord Melcomb. "How did that chance?"

"I will tell you, sir," replied Beckford. "Having received information that Lord Melcomb was making inquiries about Lawrence Lorimer, and fancying they might be with no very friendly intent, I set to work myself, with what result you see. It is right to say that I acted entirely without the Lord Mayor's knowledge or concurrence."

With this he handed the letter to the King, who proceeded to read it carefully through, and then examined the confession enclosed in it.

"Hum!" muttered Lord Melcomb, while his Majesty was thus employed. "My agent has betrayed me. Beckford must have learnt that the King was coming here, and have brought that letter with him, waiting an opportunity to produce it with most effect."

Meanwhile, Winter had approached his unfortunate brother, and assisted him to rise. The sudden revulsion of feeling had been almost too much for the old man, and for a few moments he remained sobbing on his brother's shoulder.

"Poor fellow! give him a chair," said the King, compassionately.

"I do not need one, sir," replied Lawrence Lorimer, mastering his emotion, and bowing gratefully to his Majesty.

"Then learn from my lips, sir," rejoined the monarch, "that you are completely exculpated. At the same time, I must express the deep concern I feel that you should have experienced so much unmerited suffering."

"Oh, sir, let me thank you on my knees for those gracious words," cried Lawrence Lorimer, prostrating himself before the King. "They requite me for all the misery I have endured."

"Rise, sir, rise!" cried the King, kindly aiding him as he spoke. "Henceforth you may bear your own name without blushing for it. 'Tis an honoured name," he added, looking round, "and I hope all who bear it will keep it spotless."

"It shall be my aim to do so, your Majesty," cried Tradescant.

"Eh! eh! who spoke?" demanded the King.

"My son, sir," replied the Lord Mayor. "Since I last had the honour to present him to your Majesty, he has raised himself greatly in my estimation."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the King. "Let him go on in the same course. But who is that old gentleman," he added, indicating Winter, who was standing beside his brother Lawrence—"from the country, eh?"

"That, sir, is Mr Winter, of Sutton Park, Yorkshire, the newly-elected member for the East Riding," replied Beckford.

"Present him—present him," cried the King. "Glad to see you, Mr Winter. How d'ye do? Just come to town, eh?"

"Arrived last night, please your Majesty," replied Winter.

"Found your way to the Mansion House already, eh? Well, sir, you've been present at a very interesting scene."

"I wouldn't have missed it for half my estate," said Winter. "It has terminated in a most satisfactory manner to us all."

"True—very true! But why particularly satisfactory to you, Mr Winter? Are you a relation of the Lord Mayor?"

"A very near relation, please your Majesty."

"Harkye, my Lord Mayor!" cried the King. "You said that both your brothers, whom you supposed dead, had come to life again. One we have just found. What has become of the other?"

"Should he chance to be in a humble position of life, the Lord Mayor is too high-minded to disown him," observed Lord Melcomb, with a sneer.

"That I am sure he would not," said Winter. "He has given proof enough of his superiority over mere worldly consideration. My position, my lord," he added proudly, "is but little inferior to your own."

"Your position, Mr Winter. I never questioned it. We were speaking of the Lord Mayor's brother, sir."

"Well, my lord," replied Winter, "I am the Lord Mayor's brother."

"The deuce you are!" exclaimed Lord Melcomb, disconcerted.

"But how comes your name to be Winter?" asked the King.

"I married a Yorkshire heiress, please your Majesty, and took her name. Before that event I was Godfrey Lorimer. Until I entered this room, Sir Gresham was not aware that I was still in the land of the living."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the King. "Why practise such a trick upon him, eh?"

"It was my daughter's doing, sir," replied Winter.

"Your daughter! Where is she?"

"Here, sir," replied Winter, leading Prue forward, who made a profound inclination to his Majesty.

"What's this I hear, young lady?" demanded the King. "You have been contriving a plot, eh?"

"A very harmless one, I trust, sir," she replied, "and I think your Majesty will scarcely blame me for what I have done, when you learn to what a display of goodness on my uncle's part it has led. On the day of Sir Gresham's installation, while he was surrounded by important personages, my brother and myself presented ourselves to him in the guise of poor relations, and though he might well have acted otherwise, he welcomed us in the kindest manner; and being led to suppose that we had no parents living, and no friends in town, insisted on our taking up our abode with him. More than this, he at once offered to place my brother in his business. From that day to this he has shown us unvarying kindness, treating us in every respect like his own children."

"Please your Majesty," said the Lady Mayoress, stepping forward, "I think my niece has used me very ill in not letting me into the secret, though she could take my youngest and least experienced daughter into her confidence. Had I known the real truth, that her father was a wealthy Yorkshire squire, I should have felt very differently towards her and her brother, and comported myself accordingly. But to come before me as a poor relation, and degrade me in the presence of great folks, was more than human nature could bear."

"Yet Sir Gresham bore it, madam," said the King, laughing.

"Ah! but, your Majesty, if my niece wished to try him, there was no necessity to try me. I don't pretend to be as soft hearted as Sir Gresham, and I can't abide to be deceived. If people are rich and pretend to be poor, they mustn't blame me for taking them at their word. My niece, I say, shouldn't have kept me in the dark. At first she lowered me, and now she makes me look ridiculous."

"I can't relieve you from the dilemma in which you have unwittingly placed yourself, madam," replied the King.

"If you had imitated your worthy husband, you would have been right on both occasions. In future, I recommend you to model your conduct on his conduct. You will find your account in doing so. And now, my Lord Mayor," he added to Sir Gresham, "a word in parting to you. I certainly did not visit you with any design of assisting at the dénouement of the little comedy played off by your pretty niece, but with a different object, which has happily been set at rest. But I am glad to have been present, since it has given me an opportunity of testing your deserts. As a loyal subject—and I know you are one—you will not be indifferent to your sovereign's commendation. You have it. You have behaved very well throughout—better, I firmly believe, than most men would have done under circumstances so peculiar. Your brothers will know how to appreciate your conduct, and I don't think, after what has occurred, that you are likely to lose sight of them again. Thus much for the estimation in which I hold your private character. In your public capacity, as chief magistrate of this great City, I hear nothing but praise of you. I am told—and I can easily believe it from what I have myself seen—that since the days of the immortal Whittington, the municipal chair has never been more worthily filled; that all your duties have been most efficiently discharged, and that this house has never known such hospitality as is now practised within it."

"Such gracious words as your Majesty has been pleased to let fall," replied the Lord Mayor, in a voice of deep emotion, "are a reward for a life of exertion. I trust I shall never forfeit your good opinion."

"No fear of that," said the King. "Go on as you have hitherto done, and I will not fail publicly to mark my approbation."

"Your Majesty is too good," said the Lord Mayor.

"Your son, you say, is well-conducted, and gives you perfect satisfaction?" said the King.

"He is all that I could wish, sir," replied the Lord Mayor, emphatically.

"That's right!" exclaimed the good-natured monarch. "Let him follow his sovereign's example, and marry. 'Tis the best thing he can do, and I dare say he'll have no objection."

"None whatever, your Majesty," cried Tradescant.

"Why not wed him to your niece?" pursued the King, smiling at the young man's eagerness. "She would make him a capital wife, I'm sure."

"Such an arrangement would be in entire accordance with my wishes, sir," responded the Lord Mayor.

"And with mine," added Winter.

"His Majesty doesn't deign to consult me," thought the Lady Mayoress. "I am nobody in his estimation."

"And what says the young lady?" pursued the King. "Before you answer, let me add that you will get a title, for the Lord Mayor will have a baronetcy."

"I do not need that inducement, sir," replied Prue. "My cousin Tradescant has long been master of my heart, and if I have hitherto declined to give him a decided answer, it has been because I have a pet project which I wish to carry out at the same time."

"Another project!" exclaimed the King, smiling. "Why, you are as full of them as a soubrette in a play. Well, you have been lucky hitherto, I dare say your scheme will succeed."

"After your Majesty's assurance I am sure it will. So when my cousin Tradescant asks again he shall have an answer."

"All happiness attend you both!" said the King, "and may the marriage be productive of comfort to you, my Lord Mayor—and to you, too, Mr Winter. And if there should be a double marriage in the family, as I suspect there will be, and another Lorimer take the name of Winter, may that union be equally propitious. And so good day, my Lord Mayor—good day to you all!"

Graciously saluting the company, who all inclined reverentially, he then passed forth with Lord Melcomb, and attended by the Lord Mayor, Sir Felix Bland, and Mr Beckford, crossed the vestibule, where by this time all the officers of the household, with the splendid retinue of servants, were arrayed, and entering the plain carriage that had brought him, drove back to St James's Palace.

End of the Fourth Book.

BOOK V.

EASTER MONDAY.

I.

THE EPPING HUNT.

Easter Monday had now arrived, a notable day in the almanack of the Corporation of London.

On this morning, attended by his chaplain, swordbearer, and macebearer, robed in scarlet, and wearing his insignia of office, the Lord Mayor proceeded to Christ Church, of which he was governor *ex officio*, to hear a sermon.

Here he was met by the president and the other governors of the ancient hospital, founded by Edward VI., while a procession, consisting of the Blue-coat Boys, beadles, masters, and other officers of the school, entered the church at the same time. In itself Christ Church is by no means remarkable for beauty, but it occupies the site of a very majestic edifice, unfortunately destroyed by the remorseless conflagration of 1666. The ancient fabric was one of the most superb conventual churches in the city of London, and had been, till despoiled by Henry VIII., very richly endowed. Possessing shrines, reputed of peculiar sanctity, the church was coveted as a place of burial by the great. Many illustrious personages were interred within its walls—four queens, amongst whom was Isabella, the " she-wolf of France," four duchesses, four countesses, earls, barons, and knights without number. Its splendid monuments of marble and alabaster were pulled down, at the dissolution of the monastery in 1545, by Sir Martin Bowes, then Lord Mayor, and the materials sold for the insignificant sum of £50.

We cannot say that any regrets for this ancient conventual church filled the breast of Sir Gresham, or that he felt indignant at the wanton desecration practised by his predecessor Sir Martin Bowes ; perhaps, indeed, he might have preferred the modern pile to the ancient, but unquestionably he looked very tranquil, and listened patiently to the discourse pronounced by the Rev. Dr Dugdale, now and then glancing at the Blue-coat Boys thronging the galleries, and admiring their quick and intelligent countenances.

The sermon over, a statement was read by Dr Dugdale of the income and expenditure of the hospitals under the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction. At the conclusion of the service, Sir Gresham and the other civic dignitaries repaired with the president and governors to Christ's Hospital, where a splendid collation awaited them. Both on entering the school and on leaving it the Lord Mayor was lustily cheered by the Blue-coat Boys.

And here we may mention that on the following day (Easter Tuesday), according to custom, these Blue-coat Boys, before going to church, marched through the Mansion House, each receiving from the Lord Mayor, who was stationed with a large party in the saloon to see them pass, a glittering silver coin fresh from the Mint, two plum cakes, and a glass of wine. Needless to say, they all drank his lordship's health.

On the same day, according to a well-known custom, there was a stag-hunt in Epping Forest, though the Lord Mayor was too much occupied to attend it.

Liberty to hunt in the royal forests in the vicinity of London was granted to the civic authorities by Henry III., and hence the appointment of the officer styled the Common Hunt, whose business it was to take care of a pack of hounds belonging to the Lord Mayor and citizens, and to attend them in those forests wherein they were authorized by royal charter to hunt.

On the Easter Monday in question there was a numerous meeting in an open and picturesque part of the forest adjacent to the pleasant little town of Epping. Fortunately the day was fine, promising to be propitious to the sport. Various and grotesque were the costumes of these cockney sportsmen, some being in scarlet coats bedizened with lace, some in green, and others in coats that seemed to belong to the days of Queen Anne. The Common Hunt was arrayed in a scarlet coat laced with gold, with a large hunting-horn slung from his shoulder, and wore a black velvet cap and top-boots. With him, besides his man, who was equipped like himself, were four foresters habited in a green, two huntsmen, and a couple of whippers-in. The latter had charge of a capital pack of stag-hounds. With the Common Hunt were a great number of fat citizens. Amongst these were Mr Winter and Herbert, both of whom, owing to the providence of the Lord Mayor, were remarkably well mounted. Herbert wore a scarlet riding-dress, which set off his fine figure to great advantage, and being a first-rate horseman, was one of the most noticeable personages on the field.

Though so near London, at that time wild stags were to be met with in Epping Forest, and the covert having been drawn, a fine roebuck was speedily roused, whereupon the Common Hunt winded his horn blithely, and the hounds were immediately cast off, and the whole field started in the chase.

"Hark forward! gentlemen!—hark forward!" shouted the Common Hunt.

"Ay, hark forward!—hark forward! tantivy!" roared the squire.

The scene that ensued was so supremely ridiculous, and so provocative of merriment, that old Winter absolutely roared with laughter. Such shouting was there!—such cracking of whips!—such rushing here and there!—such jostling—such swearing—such confusion—as never was seen the like!

Half the fat citizens recently gathered round the Common Hunt were unseated—others, having lost their hats and wigs, were clinging to their horses' manes like John Gilpin, and roaring lustily for help. Some were carried back, against their will, towards Epping. Others were borne off into the thickest part of the forest, and did not reappear till the chase was over. Hundreds of riderless horses were seen flying about, and some of these, excited by the shouts and clatter, followed the hounds.

As the chase went on, fresh disasters occurred, and more citizens were left on the ground, and unable to regain their steeds. In less than a quarter of an hour the field was diminished to a third of its original number, but even then there was a great throng, and so much pressing and struggling that even a good horseman was in danger from the clumsiness and bad riding of his companions.

At first, as we have said, the old squire laughed immoderately at the mishaps of the citizens, but when they dashed against him or got in the way, he soon began to lose his temper, and swore in a style worthy of an old fox-hunter. Finding, however, it was impossible to keep them off either by voice or whip, he extricated himself as speedily as he could from the press, and shouted to Herbert to join him.

They had not ridden far together, when a stoutly-built man, in a chocolate-coloured riding-dress, and mounted on a thorough-bred bright bay, joined them. No sooner did the old squire cast eyes on this personage than he recognized him.

"By the Lord Harry! 'tis he!" he cried. "'Tis the Flying Highwayman, who took ten guineas from me t'other day near Barnet. Zounds! sirrah," he added to the man, "have you the impudence to show yourself on an occasion like this?"

"Why not?" replied the other. "I have as much right to be here as you. I attend all meetings and races. But you are mistaken in saying I robbed you. I've not been at Barnet for months."

"I might be mistaken about you," rejoined the squire, "but I'll swear to your horse. I knew him again in a moment."

"But my prancer doesn't prove me to be a highwayman, old cock. This is a well-known horse, Reg'lus. I bought him from the Lord Mayor's son, Mr Tradescant Lorimer, when that young gem'man left the turf."

"The deuce you did!" exclaimed the squire, in surprise. "Well, he's a fine horse, I must say."

"Is this Regulus?" cried Herbert, glancing admiringly at the animal.

"Yes, sir," replied the rider, proudly. "This is Reg'lus, and a reg'lar good 'un he is."

"Will you sell him?" demanded Winter.

"Not if you'd give me his weight in gold," replied the man.

"Then I'll have him and you too," rejoined the squire, snatching at the bridle.

"No you won't, old blade," replied the highwayman, eluding him, and spurring Regulus, who bounded forward. "There isn't a horse in this field that can catch me."

"I'll try what I can do," rejoined Herbert, starting after him.

The squire also set off in pursuit, bellowing out at the top of his voice, "A highwayman—a highwayman!" But though at other times such a cry might have produced the desired effect, it was now, in the tumult and excitement, almost unheeded. Many thought it a hoax—and almost all preferred hunting the deer to chasing a highwayman. Only half a dozen followed the old squire and his son, and these speedily dropped off, and returned to the hounds. It was evident, indeed, that there was but little chance of capturing the highwayman, who had not overrated the powers of his steed. He led his pursuers into the forest, carrying them over sweeping glades towards Harlow, and finally plunging into a thicket, was lost.

"That Regulus is a devilish fine horse," cried the squire, as they rode back. "I wish Tradescant had sold him to me instead of to that saucy knave."

"Ay, he's a beauty," replied Herbert. "Tradescant offered him to Tom Potter, member for Aylesbury, but, as Tom wouldn't buy, he sold him for an old song to the first bidder. That rascal only gave a hundred for him."

"And he's worth a thousand," rejoined the squire, with something like a groan. "But where are the hounds?" he added, pausing to listen. "Ha! I hear them. They are coming this way."

As he spoke, the lordly hart, distinguishable by his noble antlers, burst into the glade along which they were riding, about a mile off, and speeded along it. Presently, the hounds, who were close upon him, and giving tongue loudly, came in view; and then the Common Hunt and his man, both of whom were excellently mounted, and rode well; and after them as many of the field as had been able to keep up with the hounds. Finding that the hart was coming straight up the glade, the old squire and his son drew to one side, beneath the covert of the trees, in order not to turn the flying animal out of his course, and from this post of observation they enjoyed the animating spectacle exceedingly. When within a quarter of a mile of them, however, the stag turned off to the right, and hounds and huntsmen of course went after him. On this the two Winters instantly quitted the covert, and crossing the glade, took a course which they thought would bring them upon the field. And so it chanced. They had not proceeded far, when they again caught sight of the hart, and, clapping spurs to their horses, soon came up with the huntsmen. They were just in time, for, now being sore pressed, the hart, having found a favourable position among the trees, stood at bay, and gored three or four hounds who rushed upon him. The cries of the wounded dogs checked the others, and they stood baying in front of him as he menaced them with his horns, but, warned by the fate of their companions, none of them ventured to attack him.

"Kill him!" shouted the squire. "Kill him, or he'll maim half the pack."

"He's dangerous," said the huntsman, not liking the looks of the infuriated animal.

"Give me your knife," cried Herbert, "and I'll despatch him."

The huntsman hesitated, but, a couple more hounds being hurt, he gave his long woodman's knife to Herbert, who, dismounting, warily approached the hart through the trees, and while the animal was staring at the hounds, suddenly dealt him the mortal blow.

The mort was then sounded, and Herbert received the compliments of the Common Hunt and the others on his prowess. The buck was not flayed and broken up on the spot as used to be the case in good old times, but was placed on boughs, and borne in triumph on the shoulders of the foresters to Epping, where a covered cart was waiting to convey the carcase to town.

After refreshing themselves at the comfortable hostel known as Epping Place with a glass of amber-bright ale, the squire and his son rode off to town, having to dine with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House.

VII.

AN OLD YORKSHIRE SERVANT.

Sir Gresham had insisted upon his eldest brother taking up his abode at the house in Cheapside, saying there were plenty of unoccupied rooms at his disposal, and Winter delightedly availed himself of the offer. To Cheapside therefore father and son repaired on their return to town, and consigning their horses to the care of the groom who had attended them, they entered the house and went up-stairs together. The squire had brought with him an old servant from Yorkshire, whose livery, uncouth manners, and appearance, were sources of great amusement to Tiplady. The shrewd old Yorkshireman, however, was quite a match for the coxcombical town valet.

On reaching the landing, the squire and his son found Tiplady and Sam Liptrap, the old Yorkshire serving-man in question, seated together in a small back-room, amusing themselves with a game at cards. Certainly a greater contrast could not be found than these two servants presented; the one hard, dry, ungainly, and attired in an old-fashioned livery; the other easy, airy, foppish, and quite as smart as his master. Old Liptrap looked somewhat confused at being thus discovered, but Tiplady was not in the slightest degree disconcerted.

"What are you about, Sam?" cried the squire; "losing your money at cards?"

"Na, na, yer honour," replied Sam Liptrap, "I be winner of these two half-crowns."

"Yes, sir," cried Tiplady, "the luck has been entirely with Mr Liptrap. But he has promised to give me my revenge."

"If he does I'll discharge him," cried Winter. "Hark-ye, sirrah, I'll have no gambling among servants. When you go to Sutton, Herbert, you must leave this puppy behind you."

"If you refer to me, sir," said Tiplady, "that direction to Mr Herbert is entirely superfluous. Under no circumstances would I consent to bury myself in the country. And I should expire outright if such a livery as Mr Liptrap's were offered me. I should, upon my honour, sir."

"The clothes be good enough, I'm quite sure," said Sam Liptrap. "I find no fawt wi' un."

"I should hope not, or you'll get no more from me," cried Winter; "but don't stand chattering there, but come with me to my room and help me to dress for the Lord Mayor's dinner."

"Lord, your honour, I should so like to see the grand dinner at the Mansion House, and the fine folk, and the plate. Mr Tip has been tellin' me abowt it."

"I'll take him, sir, if you will permit me," said Tiplady.

"Well, well, you may go, Sam. But you don't get drunk and make a fool of yourself. And now come along, or I shall be late."

So saying, he marched off to his room, followed by the old servant, while Herbert proceeded in another direction, attended by Tiplady.

Though often pressed by the Lord Mayor to dine at the Mansion House, Crutchet, with characteristic modesty, had hitherto refrained from doing so, but the Easter banquet held out such irresistible temptations, especially when Tradescant told him that all the family were to be assembled on the occasion, and that, being looked upon as one of them, he could not, with propriety, be left out, that he yielded, and prepared himself for the important event. Arrayed in a handsome suit of black, expressly ordered for the occasion, he went up-stairs about half-past five—the dinner-hour at the Mansion House being six o'clock—and proceeded to the drawing-room, where he was shortly afterwards joined by Tradescant and the two Winters.

The old squire wore a cinnamon-coloured velvet coat garnished with lace, a rich brocade waistcoat, a laced steinkirk folded broadly over his chest, and a peruke arranged by the skilful hands of M. Le Gros. Tradescant was also elegantly and even richly dressed in dark velvet, but was quite eclipsed in show and splendour by Herbert, who was now, beyond all question, the beau of the family. On seeing Crutchet, for whom he had a great liking, Mr Winter went up to him, and shaking him cordially by the hand, said, "I'm delighted you are going with us to the Mansion House, Bow Bells. If you had been absent to-day, the dinner would have been incomplete."

"That's what I told Mr Crutchet, uncle," said Tradescant. "I said we should all—from the Lord Mayor downwards—be greatly disappointed if he stayed away. But I had hard work to persuade him. Would you believe it, he has never yet dined either at Guildhall or the Mansion House."

"I can believe anything odd of him," said Winter.

"But what's your reason for such strange conduct, Bow Bells? It can't be because you've not been invited?"

"No, that's not it, sir," replied Crutchet. "The Lord Mayor has repeatedly asked me. But I'm not fit company for such great folks as dine with his lordship."

"Pshaw! you underrate yourself, Bow Bells. You're fit company for anybody. However, I'm glad you've made up your mind to dine with us to-day. You'll have a famous dinner, I can tell you—plenty of venison and turtle—ha! ha!"

"Why, sir, you talk of the venison and turtle with as much gusto as an alderman," observed his son.

"Oddsflesh!" exclaimed the old gentleman, chuckling, "there isn't an alderman among them, or a Mazarine either, who will bring a better appetite to the feast than I shall. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and shall do ample justice to all the good things the Lord Mayor may set before me. Follow my example, Bow Bells, and you'll do well."

"Your ride to Epping has been of service to you, uncle," observed Tradescant, laughing. "Pray how did the stag-hunt go off?"

"Wonderfully," replied the old gentleman. "Never was at such a meeting in my life—ha! ha! Such cattle! such riders—why, sir, five minutes after the start the ground looked like a field of battle, strewn with prostrate cits—Culloden was nothing to it—ha! ha! ha!"

"And who should we come upon but the Flying Highwayman!" observed Herbert. "We gave him chase, but he got away from us. However, you won't be surprised at that, when I tell you he rode Regulus."

"Regulus! is it possible? No wonder, then, he performs such wonderful feats."

"I shall get Regulus when the rascal is hanged," laughed the squire.

At this moment, Tiplady announced that the carriage was ready. Whereupon all the party went down-stairs and got into the conveyance, which was drawn up at the private door in Queen-street, and Tiplady and old Liptrap having climbed up behind, the coachman drove towards the Mansion House.

By this time Cheapside was filled with a long line of splendid equipages, proceeding in the same direction. By the aid of a peace-officer, the carriage containing our friends was at once admitted into the line, otherwise they might have been long in reaching their destination. As it was, they proceeded so slowly that it was full a quarter of an hour before they arrived at the Mansion House.

III.

THE EASTER BANQUET.

The approaches to the grand portal were covered with awnings. Both flights of steps were so crowded with richly-dressed persons of both sexes, that access to the great doorway was a work of some difficulty. However, our friends reached it at last.

Here were stationed on either side the Lord Mayor's beadles in their state liveries, holding their silver-headed staves, other stavesmen, some officers of the City militia, and two officers of the household, bearing white wands. Within the portal, and at the entrance to the vestibule, stood the senior City Marshal in his full habiliments, the junior City Marshal, various officers of the household in full dress, the Lord Mayor's barge-master in his state dress, the watermen carrying their colours, seven trumpeters in embroidered frocks, holding clarions fringed with gold, the Lord Mayor's three carvers, the Lord Mayor's coachman, Mr Keck, in his state-livery, the postilions in their tight buckskins and black velvet caps, adorned with Sir Gresham's crest, and a whole array of tall footmen in state-liveries.

Besides these, and many others whom we have not time to particularize, there was a grand military band, with a guard of honour, consisting of a company of Grenadiers, in their tall caps and full regimentals, drawn up in two lines along the vestibule.

What with the numerous guests constantly pouring in and passing on, the various functionaries belonging to the Lord Mayor's household, and the guard of honour, with the officers belonging to it, the saloon, spacious as it is, looked thronged, and presented a very imposing spectacle. To those who had never seen it on a similar occasion, as was the case both with Mr Winter and old Crutchet, it was peculiarly striking. Here might be seen a portly alderman in his scarlet gown and chain ceremoniously welcoming the prime warden of the Merchant Tailors' Company, and his wife and daughters; here was another alderman, likewise in his robes, and wearing his badges of office—in this case it was our acquaintance, Sir Felix Bland—paying his devoirs, in his usual adulatory style, to some charming court ladies; here was a group of deputies and common-councilmen in their mazarine blue robes, talking and chatting together, and passing remarks on the company as they passed in review before them; but these were only parts in the brilliant scene, which it would require time to examine fully.

Above the general buzz proceeding from the crowd, and resounding from the dome, arose the loud voices of the ushers as they announced the guests. The old squire gazed around him with wonder, not unmingled with admiration. Prepared as he was for a showy scene, this display of civic pomp and splendour far exceeded his expectations, and he began to have a higher notion of the dignity and importance of his brother's office than he had previously entertained. The sight of so many personages rather bewildered him, and he moved on with the stream in silence, gazing with a sort of awe, that rather surprised himself, at the numerous civic dignitaries and grandly-arrayed officers of various degrees by whom he was surrounded. Poor Crutchet was so dazzled by the splendour of the scene that he scarcely dared to look round.

Descrying the party as they moved along, and chancing to be disengaged at the moment, Sir Felix Bland immediately made up to them, and seizing Mr Winter by the hand, said, "My dear sir, I'm so very happy to see you—and you too, my dear Mr Crutchet—delighted to see you here, sir—first time I've had that pleasure. Been to the Epping Hunt, I hear, my dear Mr Winter—droll scene, isn't it? But you must use your eyes, my good sir, and look around you. There's the Chamberlain, and that's the prime warden of the Goldsmiths' Company with his wife, and that's the City Remembrancer, with the Comptroller and the two Secondaries, and there's Sir Nathaniel Nash, one of the sheriffs—the other sheriff, Sir John Cartwright, has just gone in." Thus he rattled on, without waiting for a reply.

In another minute the party had arrived at the entrance of a large room on the left of the saloon, which forms an ante-chamber to the principal apartments on this floor. Here a number of persons, who had been presented, were assembled, and here the guests, as they arrived, delivered their titles or names to an usher, who, marching to the door of an inner room, proclaimed them aloud, and the announcement was again and again repeated, until the presence-chamber was reached.

In the middle of this noble room, arrayed in his full robes, with the collar of SS. round his neck, stood the Lord Mayor, and so full of dignity was his deportment, that even his brother when he approached him, preceded by the usher, was impressed by it. On his lordship's left stood the Lady Mayoress, in a rich brocade dress, having a stomacher of diamonds and other ornaments. Her head-dress, which, in spite of the royal reproof, again towered aloft, was adorned with pearls, and nodded with ostrich plumes. With her were her two favourite daughters, both of whom were attired with their customary taste and splendour. Indeed, as the Duke of York was expected, Lady Dawes had heightened her charms to the utmost, and really looked very fascinating. However, neither she nor Mrs Chatteris could compare in point of positive beauty with Milly and Prue; and though they far outshone the younger graces in splendour of attire, they fell short in the essentials of personal attraction. Though not occupying so prominent a place as the favourites, Milly and Prue formed part, of course, of the Lady Mayoress's entourage. Dressed precisely alike, in white satin ornamented with pearls, they were distinguished by a taste and simplicity that lent them an indescribable charm.

"No ceremony with me, my dear brother," cried the Lord Mayor, holding out both hands to Mr Winter, and preventing the formal bow which the latter meditated. "No ceremony," he repeated. "Delighted to see you. You must take care of yourself, for I shan't have much time to attend to you till later on in the evening."

"Don't give me a thought, brother," replied Winter. "I shall do very well, I'm sure, and if I should be at a loss for anything, I can apply to Tradescant. Oddsflesh! how well you look," he added, in a lower tone. "It's a very fine thing to be brother to a Lord Mayor, and I feel myself of more consequence than I did a short time ago."

"It's a very pleasant thing to have you and Lawrence with me on this occasion, my dear Godfrey," replied the Lord Mayor, "and I can assure you that all the homage I have paid me to-day doesn't yield me half the satisfaction I experience at the sight of you both. And now go to her ladyship, for Crutchet is waiting to be presented."

With this Winter passed on, and made his bow to the Lady Mayoress, who received him graciously, while his two nieces, who stood near, smiled upon him most sweetly, essaying to make him believe they were enchanted to see him. But they were far too fine ladies to please the plain old gentleman, who abominated affectation and pretension as much as he liked simplicity and modesty, and he was, therefore, very glad to escape from them to his daughter and Milly, of whose sincerity he had no doubt, and whose manner and appearance yielded him unmitigated satisfaction.

He was still with them when Crutchet came up. As may be supposed, the worthy old fellow had been most kindly received by the Lord Mayor, who did everything he could to set him at his ease, and quite succeeded in doing so; but the next moment the poor fellow's self-satisfaction was destroyed by the Lady Mayoress, who turned away disdainfully as he approached her, not even acknowledging his profound obeisance, while her elder daughters imitated her ladyship's example. He was smarting under this rudeness when he came up to Mr Winter, who, having noticed the previous occurrence, would not allow him to go on till he had spoken to Prue and Milly, and their amiability and good nature speedily set him right. In another minute Tradescant and Herbert joined them, and then Sir Felix, who had been showering his compliments upon the Lady Mayoress and her two elder daughters, came up, and was equally fervent in his expressions of admiration of the younger ladies.

Meanwhile, the company was arriving fast, and presentation after presentation took place. After several distinguished personages had been proclaimed by the usher, his Grace the Duke of Newcastle was announced, and the little withered, sharp-featured old peer, richly attired, and wearing the blue riband and star, tottered forward, and made his bow, with the grace of a courtier of George the Second's day, to the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress. Scarcely had Newcastle retired when he was succeeded by the Right Hon. George Grenville, principal secretary of state. Next came the Marquis of Rockingham, chief lord of the bedchamber, and then there were dukes in succession—namely, Devonshire, Bolton, and Portland.

Then came a number of commoners, all of whom were distinguished in some way or other, and amongst whom were our acquaintances, Wilkes, Tom Potter, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Francis Dashwood, and Sir Thomas Stapleton.

Then came more peers and peeresses, pre-eminent among the latter being the three court beauties whom, earlier in our story, we had the pleasure of introducing as visitors to Guildhall—namely, the Duchess of Richmond and the Countesses of Pembroke and Kildare. All three were superbly attired, and radiant with pearls and precious stones, and still maintained their supremacy for grace and beauty, for no one in that large assemblage—and there were many charming women present—could for a moment compare with them. Three creatures more ravishingly lovely cannot be imagined, and on their appearance all eyes were irresistibly drawn towards them. The Lord Mayor's polite attentions to them at Guildhall on the occasion of their visit, had made a very agreeable impression upon all three, and they showed by their manner how much pleased they were to see him. On his part, Sir Gresham could not fail to be highly gratified by their presence, and he said so in terms which he could not have employed had not the beauty of his guests called forth his admiration.

"Your lordship has been taking a lesson in the art of compliment from that arch-professor, Sir Felix Bland, since we had last the pleasure of seeing you," said the Duchess of Richmond, smiling; "but we really are more indebted to you than we can express for giving us an opportunity of witnessing another grand civic entertainment. We have a most agreeable recollection of the first, I can assure you."

And the duchess's assurance was confirmed by the smiling looks of her lovely companions.

"I am enchanted to see your grace and their ladyships at the Mansion House," replied the Lord Mayor; "and though I cannot offer you the attractions held out by the presence of their Majesties on the former occasion, nothing shall be wanting on my part to render your visit agreeable, and evince my sense of the honour, and, I may add, the extreme pleasure you confer upon me."

Acknowledging this speech with a smile that a syren might have envied, the duchess and her companions went on; but though they were received by the Lady Mayoress and her elder daughters with an assiduity amounting to obsequiousness, they were haughty and distant, and the duchess completed the Lady Mayoress's dismay by inquiring who those two very pretty girls were behind her—meaning Milly and Prue—and on being informed, at once addressed them, saying, in the most affable manner, that she felt sure she had seen them before, but couldn't exactly tell where, adding some other complimentary remarks on the improvement in their appearance, extremely gratifying to all who heard them, save, perhaps, to Lady Dawes and Mrs Chatteris.

While this was passing, other distinguished guests had arrived, the Duke of Manchester, her Majesty's chamberlain; Lord Cantilupe, vice-chamberlain; and the Earl of Harcourt, master of the horse. Amongst the peeresses were the Duchesses of Ancaster and Hamilton, and the Countesses of Effingham and Egremont. Next came Lord Sandwich, and then some eminent lawyers; after which a general sensation was created by the arrival of the Earl of Bute, who had just obtained the post he had so long coveted, of first lord of the treasury.

The new prime minister attracted all eyes as he entered the room. Attired, as usual, in black velvet trimmed with silver, and wearing the blue riband and star, Lord Bute presented a very stately appearance, and as if conscious of the additional importance he had recently acquired, he advanced very majestically and slowly towards the Lord Mayor, as if expecting his lordship to come forward to meet him. But Sir Gresham did not move, but awaiting the earl's approach, returned his ceremonious bow with a dignity equal to his own. With the prime minister came his confidant, Lord Melcomb, who had helped him to his present eminent position, and who looked even more self-sufficient and contemptuous than the Favourite.

"I am happy to tell you, my Lord Mayor," observed Bute, "that I have reached the City without molestation. From former experience, I was under some little apprehension of rude treatment on this side of Temple-bar. But I have met with none. Mr Pitt, I believe, does not dine with your lordship. Perhaps," he added, with some significance, "his absence may account for the quietude of the mob."

"If Mr Pitt had honoured me with his company, my lord, he might have been cheered on his way hither," rejoined the Lord Mayor, "since it is utterly impossible to repress the enthusiasm my fellow-citizens feel for him. But I am glad to learn from your lordship that they are better able than they were to control their feelings of displeasure."

To this rejoinder, though secretly annoyed by it, Bute didn't deem it advisable to make a reply, but turning to the Lady Mayoress, bowed to her in a stiff and stately manner, while Lord Melcomb shook out a cloud of powder from his enormous periwig, as he bent ceremoniously to Sir Gresham.

A seasonable relief was offered at this moment by the arrival of the royal Dukes, as was proclaimed by the striking up of the national anthem by the military band stationed in the saloon, as well as by the grounding of arms by the guard, the sound of which could be distinctly heard. Whereupon the Lord Mayor, attended by the sheriffs and some of the aldermen, went to meet his royal guests, and encountered them in the vestibule.

The Duke of Cumberland looked somewhat better than he did when he visited Guildhall, but his features were still bloated and distorted, and he walked with difficulty. His speech being slightly affected, it was difficult to make out what he said, and his gruff tones and sullen manner left it generally doubtful whether he was pleased or the reverse. This was certainly the case on the present occasion, for he put out his hand to the Lord Mayor, and then drew it quickly back as if hurt by the pressure, growling at the same time like a mastiff with a sore paw.

Very different from that of his uncle was the deportment of the Duke of York. Shaking hands heartily with the Lord Mayor, he bowed graciously to the sheriffs and aldermen, and conversed most affably with every one around him. He was magnificently dressed in a coat of gold brocade, turned up with silk, and embroidered with large flowers in silver and colours, and having diamond buttons. His ruffles were of the finest point-lace; and he wore a diamond solitaire, with brilliants at the knee and in his shoes.

Conducting his royal guests to the inner chamber, the Lord Mayor presented them to the Lady Mayoress, and as soon as this ceremony was gone through, the gallant young Duke addressed himself to Lady Dawes, who was now made supremely happy. Little time, however, was allowed for conversation of any sort, for dinner being announced, the doors communicating with the saloon were thrown open, whereupon the Lord Mayor offered his arm to the Duchess of Richmond, and led her forth.

The Duke of Cumberland followed with the Lady Mayoress, and Lady Dawes, to her infinite delight, fell to the care of the Duke of York.

Before this, all the guests had been informed by the master of the ceremonies and other officials whom they were to take to dinner, and where they were to sit, so that no delay or confusion occurred, but all went according to their degrees, and in the order prescribed. Prue, we may mention, was consigned to Tradescant, and Milly to Herbert; but no lady was allotted to Mr Winter, a deprivation, we are sorry to say, that did not give him much concern.

Preceded by the trumpeters blowing lively flourishes, by ushers and gentlemen of the household bearing white wands, by the swordbearer and macebearer, the Lord Mayor ushered his guests into the Egyptian Hall, and proceeded towards the upper table at the eastern end of the room.

Besides the elevated table appropriated to the Lord Mayor, his most important guests, and the chief civic dignitaries, three other tables, allotted to the general company, ran down nearly the whole length of the hall. In the midst of the upper table, and opposite the throne-like chairs destined for the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, stood a large silver-gilt plateau, comprising a beautiful group of figures, the chief of which, a very graceful woman, crowned with turrets, and bearing a shield graven with the City arms, was intended to represent the city of London. Besides this splendid centre-piece the whole table was covered with costly dishes, salvers, and flagons, of rare workmanship. On a high beaufet at the back was another grand display of gilt salvers, plate, and drinking vessels.

The three lower tables were also handsomely ornamented, though they could not, of course, be compared in point of splendour with the upper. Richly decorated for the occasion, splendidly illuminated by girandoles and lustres dependent from the ceiling, and by candelabra set on the tables, filled with company, the grand banqueting-chamber presented a most imposing coup-d'œil, and as the old squire, who was placed at the upper table, among the illustrious guests, looked down it, noted the immense Corinthian pillars on either side, the decorations, and the superb appointments, he thought he had never beheld so magnificent a sight.

By this time all the principal guests had been marshalled to their places. The two large chairs we have referred to were of course occupied by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress. On his lordship's left sat the Duchess of Richmond, and next to her grace was the Duke of York, and beside him Lady Dawes. The Lady Mayoress was supported by the Duke of Cumberland, next to whom sat the Duchess of Ancaster with Lord Bute. All the members of the Lord Mayor's family had places at the upper table, and his two brothers sat together.

Grace having been pronounced by the chaplain, in tones that resounded through the hall, the banquet commenced. It is scarcely necessary to say that the entertainment was of the most sumptuous description, but we may add what Sir Felix Bland declared, that he had never seen anything like it. In fact, it was universally admitted to have been the grandest banquet and the most splendidly served that up to that period had been given in the Mansion House. Every delicacy that could be obtained was set before the guests, and no distinction was made between the upper and lower tables, the latter being served in precisely the same manner as the other. The wine was of the finest vintages, and poured forth in flowing cups. The old squire enjoyed himself immensely, and did ample justice to the turtle and venison of which he had spoken, while Lawrence, though he could not boast of his brother's appetite, proved himself no despicable trencherman.

In the intervals of the repast, Mr Winter looked about for Old Bow Bells, and at last discovered him seated near the bottom of the central table, and, managing to catch his eye, raised his glass, and drank to him. The old fellow was in a state of perfect elysium. To him it was a scene of fairy splendour, such as his imagination had not conceived.

Familiar as they had now become with such entertainments, both Tradescant and Herbert were struck by the extraordinary splendour of the banquet; and indeed the universal opinion was that it could not possibly be surpassed. But feasts, however sumptuous they may be, must, like everything else, come to an end, and guests, albeit insatiable, must, however reluctantly, leave off carousing, and so the Easter Banquet given by our Lord Mayor, though longer than such feasts usually are, was at last brought to a close.

Grace being said, and the Loving Cup having gone round, the health of their Majesties was proclaimed by the crier, and drunk amidst immense cheering. The Duke of York then arose, and in graceful terms proposed the health of the Lord Mayor, whom he highly eulogized for his noble qualities. The toast was rapturously received, and drunk with an enthusiasm rarely witnessed, proving the estimation in which Sir Gresham was held. Hearty and long-continued were the cheers. In acknowledging the distinguished honour paid him, the Lord Mayor, who was deeply moved, spoke briefly and modestly of his own career, showing how he had risen to his present distinction, and proving that a similar path was open to all his fellow-citizens. " I shall not, I am sure," said his lordship, " be misunderstood when I hold myself up to a younger generation as an example and an encouragement. It is from no feeling of vain-gloriousness that I do so, but from the earnest desire to stimulate them to honourable exertion. I have shown how I have risen. They may rise in like manner. Throughout my career I have discharged my duties to the best of my ability, and have now abundantly reaped my reward. Such manifestations as yours would be enough. But I am proud to be able to declare to this distinguished assemblage that the title I have acquired by no unworthy means will be transmitted to my son, since I have this day received from my gracious sovereign a patent of baronetcy."

With these words he sat down amid the general plaudits of the company.

Other toasts followed, but it will not be necessary to particularize them. It may be mentioned, however, that in speaking of the House of Commons, Mr Beckford took occasion to refer to the new member for the East Riding, Mr Winter, explaining that gentleman's relations to the Lord Mayor. He also alluded to Lawrence Lorimer, and without entering into any details, described how strangely the three brothers had met after so many years' separation. The health of the Lady Mayoress, gracefully proposed by the Duke of York, who contrived to mix up with it many compliments to her daughters, closed the list of toasts; and the Lord Mayor having responded to it, the company arose at a signal from the crier, and adjourned to the ball-room.

IV.

THE BALL.

The ball-room, a splendid apartment, corresponding in length though not in breadth with the Egyptian Hall, was situated in the upper storey. Surrounded by a gallery for spectators, and possessing a large orchestra, it was appropriately adorned with panels representing musical instruments of every variety. On the present occasion it was brilliantly lighted up, festooned with flowers and otherwise decorated, while a cordon of uncoloured lamps ran round the gallery. The floor was chalked with devices in varied colours, and a square space was preserved for the dancers by means of silken ropes attached to brass rods. Connected with the ball-room was a large and handsomely-furnished withdrawing-room, and to this room, on quitting the Egyptian Hall, the Lord Mayor and his guests repaired. There tea was served; and there the Lady Mayoress received such of the guests as had only been invited to the ball. Very numerous they were, and extremely amusing it was to see so many City beaux and belles tricked out in all their finery.

As may be supposed, the Lady Mayoress, surrounded as she was by great folks, and heartily ashamed of such an addition as this to her party, received them most haughtily, and sometimes even moved her fan impatiently to intimate to them to pass by. But Sir Gresham was as affable as ever, bowing courteously to all, and smiling a welcome when too far off to utter it.

Her ladyship had now no support from her elder daughters, both of whom were otherwise occupied—Lady Dawes with the Duke of York, and Mrs Chatteris with Lord Sandwich, who, failing with one sister, had transferred his attentions to the other. But she had much better assistance than they would have afforded in the persons of Milly and Prue, who stood beside her, and by their amiable deportment mitigated in some degree the effect of her rudeness.

Some hundreds of guests had flocked in, and had been subjected to the terrible ordeal of passing the Lady Mayoress, when the usher at the door bawled out the familiar names of Mr, Mrs, and Miss Walworth, and the party came on, not without misgiving as to the reception they should meet with. Strange to relate, the Lady Mayoress was remarkably gracious, and seemed to have quite forgotten her former misunderstanding with them. She graciously saluted Mrs Walworth, and even shook hands with Alice. Close behind them was a tall, handsome, but somewhat effeminate-looking young man, whom the usher had announced as Mr Charles Cracraft. As soon as he bowed to the Lady Mayoress, this gay-looking spark joined Alice, who took his arm.

"There she is, my dear Mr Winter," cried Sir Felix Bland, who was standing near the old squire; "that's Alice Walworth. What d'ye think of her?"

"Humph!" exclaimed Winter. "She's well enough to look at. But who's that young coxcomb who has just given her his arm?"

"Oh, that's Charley Cracraft," replied Sir Felix.

"Charley Cracraft, is it?" cried Winter. "Then, in my opinion, Alice is likely to be Mrs Charles Cracraft. What do you think, Herbert?" he added to his son, who was standing by with Tradescant.

"As likely as not," replied the young man, with affected indifference, though it was plain he was piqued. "I'll go and speak to her," he added.

And he was making his way towards that part of the room whither the Walworths had gone, when he was stopped by Wilkes and Tom Potter, who caught hold of him and detained him.

"That girl will never do for Herbert," said Winter to Tradescant. "I can see that at a glance."

"You are quite right, sir," replied his nephew. "And I hope, before the evening is over, to convince him that he has to do with an arrant coquette, who cares nothing about him."

"I hear what you say," cried Prue. "Come this way, I want to whisper a word to you." And then she added, in an under-tone, "Free Herbert from that coquette; bring him to Milly's feet; and you shall fix the wedding-day as soon as you please."

"I'll do my best," he replied; "but you must all help me. Harkye, Sir Felix," he added, "I want your assistance." And he took the little alderman aside. "I know I can depend upon your friendship," he said.

"That you can, my dear sir—entirely. Anything to prove it."

On this Tradescant whispered a few words in the little alderman's ear, to which Sir Felix replied, "I'll do it, my dear sir. Rely on me."

At this moment the doors of the ball-room were thrown open, and the master of the ceremonies, accompanied by two gentlemen of the household, advanced towards the Lord Mayor. At the same time the military band, which now occupied the orchestra, struck up, enlivening the company with their inspiriting strains.

"Will it please your Royal Highness to dance a minuet?" said the Lord Mayor to the Duke of York.

"Shall I have the supreme felicity, madam?" said the Duke, bowing ceremoniously to Lady Dawes.

"Your Royal Highness does me infinite honour," she replied, dropping a profound curtesy as she gave him her hand.

Preceded by the master of the ceremonies and the other officials the Duke then led her to the ball-room, and as she marched with stately step her mother's eyes followed her with pride and admiration. A good many other female eyes followed her too, but with most of the owners of them she was rather an object of envy than of admiration. After the royal Duke and his charming partner walked Lord Sandwich and Mrs Chatteris, and they were succeeded by Tradescant and Prue. The greater portion of the company flocked after them quickly, filling all that part of the room outside the reserved space. One of the cords being unhooked by the master of the ceremonies, those about to dance took their places, when two other couples presented themselves, and, as there was plenty of room, were admitted. These, to Tradescant's surprise, proved to be Herbert and Alice, and Mr Wilkes and Milly. The music then struck up, and the minuet began. The stately dance was admirably executed by all those engaged in it, and even Wilkes, whose friends drew near the ropes to laugh at him, came off with éclat. Alice Walworth also acquitted herself exceedingly well, and the old squire, who looked on, was obliged to own that she was an uncommonly pretty girl. He fancied, however, from the direction occasionally taken by her glances, that she was displaying her graces to young Cracraft, who was standing just in front of him, near the ropes. At the Guildhall ball it was thought that the best dancers were the Lady Mayoress's elder daughters, but now the palm was universally accorded to her ladyship's youngest daughter and niece, the latter of whom enchanted all the assemblage by her graceful movements.

The minuet was succeeded by a cotillon, in which a great many young persons took part; a jig came next, and then a rigadoon, and after that a Scotch reel. If the beaux of the east were not as polished and well-bred as their rivals of the west, they were quite as fond as the others of footing it on the light fantastic toe, while the belles of the City, not being worn out by incessant routs, drums, and ridottos, like the languid fair ones of St James's, compelled their partners to greater exertion. Hence it followed that the Mansion House ball, though comprising, as might be expected, a very mixed assemblage (which to our thinking is by far the pleasantest kind of assemblage), was a very agreeable entertainment, and remarkable for life and spirit. The dancers were indefatigable, and were incited to constant exertion by the Lord Mayor, who was as active as the master of the ceremonies in providing his guests with partners. Kind-hearted Sir Gresham liked, above all things, to see young people happy, and strove by every means in his power to promote their happiness. Thus nothing afforded him more unmixed satisfaction than to witness the gaiety pervading the assemblage. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. If not dancing, they were laughing and chatting, and nothing but mirth and good humour seemed to prevail. There was no stiffness, no formality, and in this respect the ball differed greatly from a grand entertainment given at the more fashionable quarter of the town, which, though very stately and imposing, would have been the stiffest and dreariest affair imaginable. Attached to the withdrawing-room there were card-rooms, where play was going on, and besides these there were refreshment-rooms, and a supper-room, in which, at twelve o'clock, a magnificent repast was served. As at the previous banquet, the guests were regaled with the choicest delicacies, and the exhausted dancers were re-invigorated by bumpers of champagne. Among those who partook of this splendid supper were young Cracraft and Alice Walworth, and so engrossed were they by each other, that they were wholly unconscious of the looks fixed upon them from the opposite side of the table, where Prue and Milly, with Tradescant and Herbert, were stationed. Calling her brother's attention to the couple, Prue said to him,

"Surely, Herbert, you cannot be blind to what is going on there! Except the minuet, which she amiably conceded to you, Alice has danced every other dance with Charles Cracraft, and he has never left her for a moment. You see how assiduous he is to her, how he whispers tender speeches in her ear, and how encouragingly she smiles upon him. If you have any engagement with this girl, break it off at once. Her present conduct warrants you in doing so."

"I have no positive engagement with her," he rejoined.

"You have engagement of some kind, I perceive," she rejoined. "You owe it to yourself to put an end to it. See! they are quitting the room together. She has never once cast her eyes this way."

"I'll bring it to an issue at once," said Herbert. "Either she shall give up young Cracraft, or she shall give up me."

So saying, he started in pursuit, but the crowd was very great, and ere he could get to the other side of the long table, the amorous couple had disappeared. While puzzling himself whither they could have gone, and trying to keep down the angry feelings which prompted him to pick a quarrel with his favoured rival, he perceived Sir Felix, who was evidently making his way towards him, and who, as soon as he came up, said, in a loud voice, "I've found it out, my dear fellow. She won't do."

"If you refer to Alice Walworth, I'm very much of your opinion, Sir Felix," replied Herbert. "But why won't she do? Let me hear?"

"I can't tell you all now, but you may trust to the correctness of my information. You know I recommended Alice to you on the score of her fortune—not entirely, of course, but principally. A girl with a plum to her fortune is a great catch—I told you so."

"You did; and I agreed with you, Sir Felix. I'm sorry to say the plum proved a lure I couldn't resist."

"Then between ourselves, my dear fellow, it's all a flam. Old Walworth can't give her a plum—not half the amount—not a fourth. Perhaps he may come down with a thousand. But that's the utmost. Will you take her with a thousand?"

"Not with a hundred thousand, as originally proposed," cried Herbert.

"Delighted to hear you say so!" exclaimed the little alderman chuckling. "Let Charley Cracraft have her. She'll do very well for him."

"Where the deuce is she?" cried Herbert. "I must settle this matter at once."

"Ay, ay, the sooner the better," exclaimed Sir Felix eagerly. "Let's go and look for them. We shall find them in some retired nook, I'll be sworn—billing and cooing like a couple of turtles—he! he! he!"

With this, Herbert and the little alderman quitted the supper-room, and as they were proceeding towards some of the smaller apartments, they encountered Wilkes and Tom Potter, of whom Sir Felix at once inquired whether they had seen anything of Alice Walworth.

"Seen her! yes, and in very good company, too," cried Wilkes, with a laugh. "She is gone into that room on the right—there—beyond the card-room. Tom Potter and I were there when the pair entered, but we soon perceived we were de trop, and discreetly left them to themselves."

"Yes, we didn't like to spoil sport," laughed Potter.

"Harkye, Herbert," said Wilkes. "I know you've been thinking of that girl of late, but I've too much friendship for you to allow you to throw yourself away upon her without remonstrance. Take my word for it, she's a coquette, and will make you miserable. Have done with her at once."

"I give you the same advice," said Potter. "Marry her and your fate is sealed!"

"If you want to marry, I'll point out to you the most charming person in the world," pursued Wilkes, "to whose merits you seem most unaccountably blind. I mean your cousin Milly. That's the girl to make you happy."

"I'm sure she is," cried Sir Felix; "and a good fortune, too."

"Hang the fortune!" cried Wilkes. "The girl is a treasure in herself, and such as doesn't fall to every man's lot to possess. But I'll tell you more, she loves you."

"Loves me!" exclaimed Herbert. "How do you know that?"

"You shall hear," replied Wilkes. "A friend of mine, whose name I won't mention, made her an offer of his hand —not an hour ago—and she replied that her affections were already engaged, and your sister afterwards told my friend that you were the fortunate individual."

"Be off with the old love before you be on with the new," laughed Tom Potter. "First get rid of Alice."

"Ay, if I could only satisfy myself of her inconstancy, I should have no hesitation."

"You have had proof enough to satisfy most people," said Wilkes; "but if you require evidence still stronger, I'll show you how to obtain it. Come with me."

And he entered the card-room, followed by the others. Here, somewhat to Herbert's surprise, he found the Lord Mayor, who was standing near a card-table, at which four persons were seated, playing whist—the players being no other than his own father, his uncle Lawrence, Mr Beckford, and Crutchet. No other person was in the room at the time. Sir Gresham, who appeared very much interested in the game, merely nodded to the party as they entered.

Signing to Herbert to follow him, Wilkes stepped towards a side-door, evidently communicating with a room beyond, and opened it softly. It then appeared that a screen was so placed in the inner room, that any one standing where he and Herbert now did, could hear what passed, without being themselves perceived. Subdued and tender accents were heard; and Herbert, though he could not see the speakers, who were seated on a couch on the other side of the screen, instantly recognized the voices. Fearing the young man might betray himself by some exclamation, Wilkes raised his finger to his lips to enjoin silence.

Herbert had arrived at a critical moment. Not only did it appear that the impassioned swain had extorted from his mistress's lips an avowal that she loved him, but he was now questioning her as to the state of her feelings towards Herbert himself, of whom he was apparently jealous.

"Then you positively assure me you don't care for him?" he cried.

"I protest I don't," she replied. "This is the twentieth time I've told you so. I certainly liked him a little, and, if you had not appeared, might have yielded to his importunities, and married him."

"Then there is no sort of engagement between you?" demanded the lover.

"None that I regard as binding," she replied. "It is true he gave me this ring as a pledge of his fidelity."

"Why not return it to him?" inquired the lover.

"I mean to do so on the first opportunity," she replied. "I see you doubt me. Why, you are more stupidly jealous than Herbert himself. There, take the ring. Do what you please with it. I neither care for it, nor for the donor."

"Thanks! thanks! my angel!" cried the inamorato, evidently from the sound covering her hand with kisses.

"Have you heard enough?" whispered Wilkes.

"Quite," replied Herbert. "Ahem!" And he coughed aloud.

The sound startled the amorous pair.

"Some one is listening—behind the screen, cried Alice, in alarm.

"I'll see who it is," said her lover. And pulling back the screen he disclosed Herbert and Wilkes, the latter of whom burst into a loud laugh, which was echoed by Tom Potter and Sir Felix, who were close behind him.

"Oh! Heavens! support me, or I shall faint," exclaimed Alice.

"Don't trouble yourself to do that," rejoined Herbert. "You will only inconvenience Mr. Cracraft."

"Have you been there all the time?" she demanded.

"I have been here quite long enough to hear your candid opinion of myself, and the preference you avow for Mr Cracraft," replied Herbert. "I congratulate him on the prize he has won. He may rest assured he will find no obstacle in me. All is at an end between us, madam."

"At least, take back your ring, Herbert!" she cried.

"No; let your lover keep it," he rejoined.

"Are these the last words we are to exchange?" she cried.

"The last," he replied, retiring and closing the door upon the pair.

What was his surprise to find, on turning round, that the company in the room had been increased, not only by Tradescant, Milly, and Prue, but also by the Lady Mayoress and her two elder daughters.

"Well, brother," cried Prue, advancing towards him. "Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly satisfied that I have been a fool," he replied. "You must laugh at me and despise me, cousin," he added to Milly.

"No," she replied, "I won't laugh at you, but I can't pity you, for you have had a great escape."

"That indeed he has," said Prue.

"Oddsflesh!" exclaimed Winter, pushing forward. "If he had married that girl I'd have disinherited him."

"But you wish me to marry, sir," responded Herbert.

"Ay, but not a coquette. I wish you to marry a quiet, amiable girl, calculated to make you happy, and your home respectable—who will bring up your family well—if you have any."

"Such good qualities are concentred in one person of my acquaintance," said Herbert. "My cousin Milly unites them all, and if she will consent to be mine, my future happiness and respectability will be ensured."

"How came you not to have discovered Milly's good qualities before this, sirrah?" cried the squire.

"My blindness is as inexplicable to myself as it can be to you, sir," replied his son. "I can offer nothing in my defence. But my eyes are wide enough open now. Your answer, cousin?"

"You must have been very blind if you did not find out long ago that you possessed my heart," said Milly, giving him her hand, which he pressed to his lips.

"Well, don't scold him any more," said Prue, "for I see he's heartily ashamed of himself—as indeed he may well be. Though he has been but a stupid lover, I venture to predict he'll make a tolerable husband. My dearest wish is now accomplished. I had set my heart upon this union."

"Don't forget that another marriage is dependent upon it, Prue?" said Tradescant.

"I never break my promises," she replied. "On the same day that Herbert and Milly are made one, and at the same church, too, you and I will be bound by chains indissoluble—if such be your good pleasure!"

"If such be my pleasure, Prue! You know that my life's happiness hangs on that event."

"Then it is for me to fix the day," said the Lord Mayor, "and as delays are dangerous in such affairs, I shall name an early one."

"Stay, stay, good folks!" interposed the Lady Mayoress. "You are going rather too fast, methinks. My consent has never been asked, either by son or daughter."

"I won't pretend to say that I have been consulted, madam," observed the Lord Mayor; "but both marriages are so perfectly agreeable to me, that, as an Irishman might say, my consent is given before it is asked. And I trust your feelings are the same, for I'm sure you can raise no objections."

"No, I don't mean to say that I shall object," said the Lady Mayoress, "quite the contrary. But there are proprieties which ought never to be neglected—and I think there has been a decided want of attention to me—on all sides. However, let that pass. I never looked for anything extraordinary for Milly, and she marries better than I expected. I wish her all happiness—and her husband too.

She will do very well, I dare say, in the country—better than in town. I had formed other views for Tradescant, but he has disappointed me of late, and therefore I had no right to raise my expectations too high. I have no doubt he has chosen well, and, at all events, I shall reconcile myself to the marriage."

"I shan't express any opinion upon either marriage," said Lady Dawes.

"Neither shall I," added Mrs Chatteris. "I wonder what my poor dear Tom would say if he were here," she murmured.

"Oddsflesh! madam," said Winter to the Lady Mayoress, "you must be hard to please if you're not content with the proposed family arrangement. Prue has been an excellent daughter—an excellent daughter, madam, and I'll answer for it will make your son an excellent wife. And as to Milly, all I can say is she deserves a better husband than Herbert."

"Oh, don't say that, uncle," cried Milly.

"Well, perhaps I do him an injustice," said the squire. "The lad has his good points, and I trust will make you happy."

"I shall strive to do so," said Herbert.

"What say you, brother?" observed the Lord Mayor to Lawrence.

"Ay, what say you, Lorry?" demanded the old squire. "Are you in favour of this double marriage?"

"Heartily," he replied. "I have long hoped both unions might come about, and have furthered them to the utmost of my power."

"And as an old friend," remarked Beckford, "let me say that I look upon both marriages as most auspicious."

"It would be an impertinence in me to make any remark," observed Wilkes, "or I should say that both Tradescant and Herbert are particularly fortunate fellows, and I don't know which of the two is most to be envied."

"Impossible to decide that point," added Tom Potter.

"As an old and faithful servant of the family," observed Crutchet, in a voice of deep emotion, "and as loving Mr Tradescant as dearly as a son, let me say how sincerely I rejoice that he will be blest with so good a wife. I know her value. There are few like her, or, if there is any one like her, it's Miss Milly. May Heaven bless the double union!"

"Well said, Old Bow Bells," exclaimed Winter. I cry 'Amen' to that prayer with all my heart."

"Since both marriages are agreed on, I trust, sir, you will name an early day for their celebration," said Tradescant to his father.

"Ay, ay, put 'em out of misery quickly, brother, I beg of you," said the old squire.

"I was about to do so, but was interrupted," said the Lord Mayor. "The marriages shall take place on this day week. Will that day suit your ladyship?"

"Don't appeal to me, Sir Gresham," rejoined the Lady Mayoress. "Any day will suit me."

"Pray let the ceremonies take place at Bow Church?" said Crutchet.

"Ay, we must hear Bow bells ring on that day," laughed Winter.

"It shall be so," said the Lord Mayor; "and Cheapside shall see such a wedding—two such weddings, I ought to say—as it has rarely witnessed. Mind, you are all invited."

"And we'll come, depend upon it, my lord," replied Wilkes.

And now, since we have arrived at the point at which a genteel comedy generally concludes, let us crave the indulgence of a good-humoured audience, and make our bow as the curtain falls.

Epilogue.

We raise the curtain for a moment, to exhibit our actors in a different scene.

The auspicious day on which the two weddings are to take place has arrived. The weather is most propitious. Everything wears a bright, sunshiny aspect, that seems to augur well for those chiefly concerned in the solemnities about to take place. Crowds are assembled near the Mansion House, before which the Lord Mayor's splendid private carriage is drawn up, with the great Mr Keck in his state-livery on the box, and four grand footmen behind it. Here, also, is the Lady Mayoress's sumptuously appointed chariot, and several other superb vehicles besides.

But not only is there a great crowd here, but the street is thronged all the way from the Mansion House to Bow Church. The windows and balconies of all the houses in this part of Cheapside are filled with well-dressed spectators. It is quite a gala-day.

Near the Mansion House and farther on, at intervals, a few peace-officers are assembled, but the concourse, great as it is, is so orderly and decorous, that the presence of these functionaries seems almost superfluous. From the gladsome expression of the countenances it is easy to discern that but one sentiment pervades the assemblage, namely, that of rejoicing in the events about to take place, coupled with an earnest desire to evince respect for the worthy Lord Mayor. His honoured name is on every lip, and it is almost a pity he cannot hear all the kind things said of him, and the sincere good wishes uttered for the happiness of his family.

Certes, this double marriage will be a grand affair, for now the sheriffs drive up in their gorgeous chariots ; next come the aldermen, the foremost among them being Sir Felix Bland and Mr Beckford; then comes the Prime Warden of the Merchant Tailors' Company; with other carriages containing important civic dignitaries.

And now a jocund train, all clad in gay attire, issues from the grand portal of the Mansion House, and while descending the lofty steps, can be fully viewed by the vast concourse. First of all comes a bevy of bridesmaids, several of them distinguished for personal attraction, escorted by the groomsmen, one of whom is Sir William Stanhope, and the other Mr Thomas Potter.

Then come the two bridegrooms, both of whom present a very gallant appearance in their wedding habiliments; the Lord Mayor, leading his younger daughter, arrayed in bridal attire, and then follows the old squire, conducting Prue, who is attired in precisely the same manner as Milly. So far as can be discerned both brides look charming.

Then comes the Lady Mayoress, who is quite a show in herself, so splendid are her dress and head-dress, and with her ladyship are her two elder daughters, in dresses calculated, from their richness and elegance, to excite the envy of the female beholders. Then come several gentlemen, amongst whom we notice Lawrence Lorimer and old Crutchet —the latter looking the picture of happiness.

Ushers bearing white wands, march in advance of the bridal train, and gentlemen of the household bring up the rear.

And now the bridesmaids have driven off, and the groomsmen, and the bridegrooms, the first bride is placed in the Lord Mayor's carriage by her father, and the tall footmen climb to their places, and Mr Keck puts his splendid horses in motion.

Another carriage soon follows, containing the second bride and her good old father, whose ruddy countenance beams with satisfaction. Next comes the Lady Mayoress's gorgeous chariot, succeeded by a long procession of carriages, containing the chief civic dignitaries, not one of whom but is anxious to be present on the occasion.

Impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the concourse as the Lord Mayor passes slowly along. Cheers are given to him, and heartfelt blessings invoked on the head of his lovely daughter. As the Lord Mayor's niece, the second bride is scarcely less an object of interest than the first, and Prue's amiable looks prepossess all in her favour. "She has a sweet face," is the general exclamation. And sweetness is really the character of her beauty. Her father, too, comes in for a share of the popular good will. Many think him personally like the Lord Mayor, and all are struck by the genial good humour of his countenance.

Amid a universal manifestation of regard, such as is rarely shown even towards the most exalted personages, the Lord Mayor and his daughter reach Bow Church, the approach to which is kept clear, though the crowd is packed densely on the opposite side of the street, and every window of the adjoining habitations is occupied.

Around the church door are grouped an immense number of civic officials, among whom are the Lord Mayor's beadles in their full dresses, with stavesmen, and watermen.

Alighting, the Lord Mayor and his daughter are ceremoniously conducted by gentlemen of the household in full dress, ushers, and other officers of the household, towards the altar, where the bridesmaids are grouped, and where the two bridegrooms, with the groomsmen, are waiting.

Close behind the first bridal party come the second, and after them marches the Lady Mayoress, with stately step. Excepting the pews reserved for the civic dignitaries, the entire body of the spacious old church is full, and even the galleries are occupied.

A brief delay occurs, to allow the entrance of the numerous important personages forming the procession, but at last they have all taken their places and the marriage rites commence, the service being performed by the Rev. Dr Dugdale, of Christ Church, assisted by the Lord Mayor's chaplain, Dr Dipple.

The assemblage at the altar forms a very charming picture. Rarely have four persons stood together more richly endowed by nature than these two youthful couples. Well matched also are their sires, both of whom, as we know, are right goodly men.

A pretty sight it is to see the two brides given away, but indeed the whole ceremony is interesting. Amongst those who witness it, no one is so much pleased as Crutchet. Rapture, indeed, can alone describe his feelings, and before the ceremony is over his full heart finds vent in tears.

Another person is profoundly moved, though in a different way. This is Uncle Lorry, as he is now generally called, and who, taking the most affectionate interest in his nephews and nieces, loving them as dearly as if they were children of his own, lowly murmurs a benediction on their heads as they kneel before the altar.

The scene and place are both calculated to awaken memories of the past within good Sir Gresham's breast. Here he himself was united to the sole object of his affections, and though his married life has not been all he then fondly hoped it might prove, he has been tolerably happy—as happy, he tries to persuade himself, as most men are.

What emotions stir the Lady Mayoress's breast on the occasion we shall not pause to inquire.

The wedding breakfast is not given at the Mansion House, but at the Lord Mayor's private residence in Cheapside. Thither the two newly-married couples repair after the ceremony, amid the shouts of the concourse still thronging the streets, above which resound joyous peals from Bow Church bells that gladden the honest heart of old Crutchet.

Thither come all the wedding guests, and though the party, as we know, is large, room is found for all at the ample and well-provided table.

The breakfast is worthy of such nuptials—worthy of Sir Gresham's princely hospitality. All that is left of the sumptuous repast is bestowed on the poor. Health and happiness are drunk to the two couples, and earnest are the wishes accompanying the toast. But every glass is emptied, and loud and long are the cheers, as Mr Beckford, in terms bespeaking his heartiness and sincerity, proposes health, long life, and continued prosperity to

THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON!

THE END.

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